

The Mystics of al-Andalus

Ibn Barrajān and Islamic Thought
in the Twelfth Century

Yousef Casewit



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The twelfth century CE was a watershed moment for mysticism in the Muslim West. In al-Andalus, the pioneers of this mystical tradition, the Mu'tabirūn or "Contemplators," championed a symbiotic reading of Muslim scriptural sources alongside Neoplatonized cosmological doctrines. Ibn Barraĵān of Seville was most responsible for shaping this new intellectual approach to the Qur'ān and Hadīth in the Muslim West, and is the focus of Yousef Casewit's book. Ibn Barraĵān's extensive commentaries on the divine names and the Qur'ān stress the significance of God's signs in nature, the Arabic Bible as a means of interpreting Muslim scripture, and the mystical "crossing" (*i'tibār*) from the visible to the unseen. With an examination of the understudied writings of both Ibn Barraĵān and his contemporaries, Ibn al-'Arīf and Ibn Qasī, as well as the wider socio-political and scholarly context of al-Andalus, this book will appeal to researchers of the medieval Islamic world and the history of Sufism in the Muslim West.

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*Ibn Barrajān and Islamic Thought
in the Twelfth Century*

YOUSEF CASEWIT
The University of Chicago



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*To my dear wife, Maliha Chishti,
the love and joy of my life,
who surpasses me in character and scholarship.*

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Notes on the Text

The Arabic transliteration system employed throughout this book follows a slightly modified version of the system recommended by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Proper nouns as well as technical Arabic words that are now common in English, such as Qur'ān, ḥadīth, jihād are fully transliterated. I rely on a slight modification of the transliteration system used by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* for the rare transliterations of Persian words.

Both *hijrī* and Common Era dates are provided in the form *hijrī*/CE. Thus, Ibn Barrajān died in 536/1141. References in the footnotes are short, and consist usually of the author's surname and a shortened title of his/her work. A handful of works are referred to by other abbreviations which are listed in the next section. Encyclopedia articles are cited in the footnotes as: *Abridged Name of Encyclopaedia*, "Title of Article," (Author). For example: EI³, "Abū Madyan," (D. Gril). Manuscripts (sing. MS, pl. MSS) are cited as *Abridged Title of Manuscript*, Place, MS Library Collection and Number (Number of Folios; *hijrī* date of copying). For example: *Sharḥ*, Istanbul, MS Topkapı Ahmet III 1495 (257 ff.; 595 h).

Translations of the Qur'ān rely considerably upon S. H. Nasr's *The Study Quran* (New York, 2015) and A. J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols. (London, 1955). Formulaic invocations of blessings upon the Prophet Muḥammad and/or his family and Companions are often omitted from the English translations for the sake of brevity.

Abbreviations

- EI*² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, eds. H. Ar. R. Gibb et al., 13 vols., Leiden, 1960–2009.
- EI*³ *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, eds. K. Fleet et al., Leiden, 2007–. Leiden, 1960–2009.
- EIr* *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, 15 vols., New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1985 – present.
- EQ* *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, 6 vols. Leiden, 2001–2006.
- GAL* *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Carl Brockelmann, Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- GAS* *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Fuat Sezgin, 13 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1967–2000.

Introduction

The most common misconception about the history of Andalusī mysticism is that it is popular and therefore well-studied. While the extraordinary impact of this tradition upon Islamic thought as a whole is widely acknowledged, only its prominent fourth-/tenth- and seventh-/thirteenth-century representatives have received some of the attention they deserve. Broadly speaking, modern scholarship has accounted for Muḥammad b. Masarra al-Jabalī's (d. 319/931) surviving mystico-philosophical treatises, as well as the central corpus of writings penned by "The Greatest Master" (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Arabī (d. 637/1240). However, much of the formative early sixth-/twelfth-century period remains *terra incognita*. We are a long way from a nuanced appreciation of the ways in which figures such as Ibn Barraġān (d. 536/1141), Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1141) and Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151) contributed to Andalusī mystical thought and provided a link between the early Masarrī tradition and later elaborations of Ibn 'Arabī. These middle-term scholars played a formative role in developing the Andalusī mystical tradition, but are largely forgotten, eclipsed, and assessed through Ibn 'Arabī's interpretive lens in both medieval and modern sources. What doctrines did they espouse? In what ways did the teachings of Andalusīs like Ibn Masarra, as well as Eastern scholars like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) bear upon them? To what extent did they impact Ibn 'Arabī and his contemporaries? How did they perceive their own place within the Islamic scholarly tradition? And how did they self-identify vis-à-vis the broader Arabic Sufi tradition in

the Eastern heartlands of Islam? Such questions have rarely been posed, and even less have been answered.¹

This study of the formative sixth-/twelfth-century period of Andalusī mysticism, which focuses in particular on Ibn Barrajān’s writings, is intended as a contribution to the ongoing reassessment of the intellectual developments of the late al-Murābiṭūn period in al-Andalus. It also affords a reevaluation and corrective of certain uncharted and misunderstood religious tendencies during this period. First, this study corrects the assertion by some that the formative Andalusī mystical tradition was a backward version of the classical Sufism of the East. It also corrects the notion that this tradition was a passive fertile soil into which Ghazālī’s encyclopedic “Revival of the Religious Sciences” (*Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*) and Sufism were implanted. Eastern Sufi and renunciant literature written by figures like Ghazālī, Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Tustarī (d. 283/896), and Makkī (d. 386/996), as well as Ash’arī theology and certain elements of philosophy, did inform the writings of Andalusī mystics during the formative period, but to a much lesser degree than has been assumed. Rather, champions of Andalusī mysticism espoused a symbiosis of Qur’ānic teachings and Sunnī Ḥadīth with the Neoplatonizing treatises of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*), the writings of Ibn Masarra, and, through indirect contact, Fāṭimī Ismā’īlī cosmological doctrines circulating in the intellectual milieu of al-Andalus. As such, exponents of this symbiotic mystical discourse were more interested in cosmology, the science of letters, cyclical notions of time, and the principle of associative correspondence between heaven and earth than in Sufi wayfaring, ethics, and the psychology of the soul.

Al-Andalus was home to an indigenous mysticophilosophical tradition that was distinct from the Arabic Sufi tradition that developed in the central and eastern lands of Islam. This typological distinctiveness is confirmed by the *self-image* that Ibn Barrajān, Ibn Qasī, and to a certain extent Ibn al-‘Arīf had of their own place within the Islamic tradition, as well as their near-total neglect of Ghazālī and the broader body of Sufi writings. They tended to keep Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) at arm’s length, and rarely employed the term. As a case in point, Ibn Barrajān spoke of Eastern Sufism only in the third person. That is, he described them as a distinct group of pietists who developed *their own* set of terminology. He admired

¹ Ebstein’s analysis of the influence of Ismā’īlī and Brethren thought on Ibn Masarra and Ibn ‘Arabi in *Philosophy and Mysticism in al-Andalus* is a welcome addition to the subject. See also his article “Was Ibn Qasī a Sufi?”

Sufis for codifying the ethical teachings and spiritual states and stations of the renunciants (*zuhhād*), but saw Sufis as being less mystically and philosophically inclined than the Andalusī tradition to which he belonged. He considered Sufism to be an intensely pious, behaviorally and ethically oriented, individualistic pursuit of self-purification. Their divisions and subdivisions of the virtues, states (sing. *ḥāl*), and stations (sing. *maqām*) were of little interest to him, for he preferred to focus on the crossing or penetration (*‘ibra*) into the unseen world (*ghayb*) through signs of God in physical existence.

The Andalusī mystics of the formative early sixth/twelfth century, and especially Ibn Barrajān, self-identified as “Mu‘tabirūn,” or “Contemplatives” (lit. practitioners of *i‘tibār*, or the Masarran *‘ibra* “crossing” into the unseen). Although the term Mu‘tabir is rooted in the Qur’ān (Q. 3:13, 12:111, 16:66, 59:2) and is not the exclusive property of Ibn Masarra and his followers, it is a designation that they most often identified with and that captured their shared mystical orientation. The Mu‘tabirūn, moreover, proclaimed theirs to be an Abrahamic approach, since Abraham (Q. 6:74–79) arrived at knowledge of divine unity by contemplating God’s signs in creation, thereby embodying Ibn Masarra’s mysticophilosophical quest for certainty (*yaqīn*). Ibn Masarra proclaimed the intellect’s (*‘aql*) ability to ascend to the highest divine mysteries without taking recourse to revelatory knowledge, and his writings served as an important source of inspiration for the Mu‘tabirūn. Although Ibn Masarra was persecuted and accused of heresy, his resilient ideas continued to resurface and evolve through the teachings of various Andalusī mystics over the next 200 years, only to receive their fullest elaborations in the early sixth/twelfth century. After the collapse of the al-Murābiṭūn dynasty in the mid-sixth/twelfth century and the rise of the pro-Ghazālīan al-Muwahḥidūn regime, the teachings of the Mu‘tabirūn were absorbed into the broader nascent Sufi tradition across the Muslim West. These teachings were resynthesized in the voluminous works of seventh-/thirteenth-century philosophical mystics such as Ibn ‘Arabī, Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241), Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 668/1270), Shushtarī (d. 667/1269), and Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291). Notably, these figures all settled and died in the East, and their teachings left an indelible mark on Islamic thought. With the rise of Sufi biographical compilations in the Maghrib around the same period, the representatives of the Mu‘tabirūn tradition were subsumed under the generic category of “Sufi” and lost their group identity. Given that the Mu‘tabirūn self-identified with a different epistemological category, I refrain from describing them as

“Sufi,” and instead I employ the term mystic (i.e., one who is interested in the mysteries of the unseen world) or simply Mu‘tabir (singular of Mu‘tabirūn).

Thus, the full-fledged “Sufi tradition” of the Muslim West, which arose as a distinct and institutionalized movement in the seventh/thirteenth century, was neither imported from the East nor grew steadily out of the renunciant tradition. Instead, “Sufism” comprised two major branches that hark back, in the case of al-Andalus, to the early third-/ninth-century Andalusī Umayyad period. The first is the praxis-oriented, intensely devotional, renunciantory quest for the divine embodied by the renunciant tradition of Seville, as well as later figures such as Abū Madyan (d. 593/1197), Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), Jazūlī (d. 869/1465), Zarrūq (d. 898/1493), and others. This tradition of “juridical Sufism” represents a continuation of the early renunciant tradition of al-Andalus, with an added layer of inspiration drawn from Ghazālī’s teachings in particular, and the Eastern Arabic Sufi tradition at large.

The second branch of the Western Sufi tradition was more philosophically inclined and controversial. This trend was – and saw itself as – a distinctive mystical tradition which evolved parallel to the first and drew comparatively little inspiration from Ghazālī and the Eastern Arabic Sufi tradition. It harks back to the teachings of Ibn Masarra, which were forced underground periodically between the fourth/tenth to the fifth/eleventh centuries, then reemerged as a fully developed mystical philosophy with Ibn Barraĵān and his peers in the formative early sixth/twelfth century, and finally reached their pinnacle with the much more elaborate writings of Ibn ‘Arabī and his likeminded peers in the seventh/thirteenth century.

In the broadest terms, therefore, appreciating the nuance and complexity of the formative Andalusī period inevitably complicates the historiography of medieval Islam, which posits a division between periphery and center: the “Marginal Muslim West” (the Maghrib) and the “Middle” Eastern heartlands (the Mashriq). Building on previous theoretical studies,² my suggestion is that medieval Islam was polycentric. Al-Andalus, at least as far as the history of mysticism is concerned, was its own productive “center” and the flow of mystical teachings between East and West was thoroughly bidirectional. In other words, Andalusī mysticism was not provincial but rather a world unto itself. Its luminaries drew

² Bulliet, *Islam*. P. Nwyia and M. Asín Palacios maintained this position in their writings as well.

just as much from their own local traditions as they did from the works of Easterners. Far from being an intellectually peripheral site of learning that passively adopted Eastern influences, the Andalusī mystical tradition both gave and received. Its intellectual distinctiveness and, one might even venture to say intellectual autonomy during the sixth/twelfth century vis-à-vis parallel trends in the Arab East is evidenced by a close reading of its written output.

IBN BARRAJĀN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE MU‘TABIRŪN TRADITION

By far the most preeminent, influential, and prolific mystic of the formative period was Ibn Barraĵān of Seville, whose full name was Abū al-Ḥakam ‘Abd al-Salām b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī al-Rijāl Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Lakhmī al-Ifriqī al-Ishbīlī (d. 536/1141). He stood at the forefront of the Mu‘tabirūn tradition, and marked the culmination of the sixth-/twelfth-century nexus of a broad range of intellectual undercurrents. He was, by admission of his own contemporaries, the most prominent, prolific, and senior Andalusī mystic of his day. He even earned the honorific title “The Ghazālī of al-Andalus” in his own lifetime. This honorific has often been misread by scholars as a sign of Ibn Barraĵān’s intellectual indebtedness to Ghazālī. In reality, this title simply denotes that, like his great Persian counterpart, Ibn Barraĵān was regarded by his peers in al-Andalus as the supreme embodiment of the Islamic mystical ideal combined with law-abiding orthodoxy.

The astounding breadth and depth of Ibn Barraĵān’s knowledge shines through every page of his works. One of the most remarkable features of his oeuvre as a whole is his ability to seamlessly assimilate and draw from various fields of learning to enrich his own teachings. He crafted his vision of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth with a broad array of unnamed sources that formed part and parcel of his inherited worldview. In venturing into other fields of learning, Ibn Barraĵān displayed a high degree of intellectual independence (that of a “*mujtahid*,” or independent legal thinker, to use a juridical term) and was not merely synthesizing other authors’ works. Notwithstanding differences in emphasis and scholarly approach among early sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī mystics, Ibn Barraĵān’s influence and the breadth of his scholarly achievements afford a unique window into the religious and mystical tendencies of this formative period as a whole. The bulk of this study will thus be devoted to analyzing and contextualizing his teachings in relation to his peers and the broader Andalusī context.

It would be no exaggeration to state that Ibn Barraġān's entire scholarly pursuit was driven by a singular purpose: a desire to attain absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) of the realities of the hereafter. Ibn Barraġān sought to realize the supreme goal and essence of all revealed religion, which he sometimes called the "Paradise of Certainty" (*jannat al-yaqīn*) wherein the realities of the hereafter are concretely experienced in this world. He taught that the key to reaching this sublime state is to undertake "the crossing from the visible into the unseen" (*al-ʿibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghāʿib*). That is, the human being can experience a concrete foretaste of celestial realities of the hereafter by training the intellect, soul, and body to traverse from the visible dimension of existence to the unseen world. Ibn Barraġān praised those who acquired this empirical knowledge of the self as Muʿtabirūn, literally, "Undertakers of the Crossing," or simply "Contemplators."

Ibn Barraġān's epistemology of certainty occupies the bulk of his writings. He promoted *iʿtibār* as a means of both undercutting and broadening the religious polemics of his day. For him, this contemplative ascent was a way of out the endless legalistic particularisms of Mālikī jurists; the "chains of transmission" or *isnād*-centered epistemology of Ḥadīth scholars; the anti-intellectualism promoted by al-Murābiṭūn theological literalists; the excessive transcendentalism of Ashʿarī theologians; the far-fetched abstractions of the Aristotelian philosophers; as well as perceived esoterist (*bāṭinī*) deviations of Fāṭimī Ismāʿīlīs who trumped the divine law.

However, while Ibn Barraġān was hailed as the "Ghazālī of al-Andalus," he and his namesake differ tremendously in approach and output. In sharp contrast to Ghazālī, who mastered philosophy (*falsafa*), theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and other Islamic sciences with an eye to engaging each discipline at its own level and buttressing his spiritualizing vision of Islam, Ibn Barraġān had little interest in proving his mastery of the formal intellectual and religious sciences. While he wielded a certain command of these fields of learning, Ibn Barraġān never sought to directly confront nor engage in what he perceived as futile juridical, theological, or philosophical arguments. Characteristically, he perceived all branches of learning, including the transmitted (*naqlī*) and intellectual (*ʿaqlī*) sciences of Islam, as well as other bodies of knowledge such as medicine, and speculations about cycles of time and determination (*dawāʿir al-taqdīr*), as points of ascension into the unseen. In his last work, he summarized his epistemology of certainty in statements such as:

The path is one, the way straight, the calling one. Those who are called upon are many: some are called from nearby (Q. 50:41), others from afar. And God prevails over His affair!³

For Ibn Barraĵān, undertaking the *'ibra* was an all-consuming quest for the divine in everything. It was an act that surpassed conventional faith in the hereafter. He reminded his readers that the Arabic word for faith (*īmān*) itself entails a conviction and certainty (*amn*) that goes beyond abstract belief. That is, the supreme goal of religion is a concrete realization of the presence of higher realities in this world, as seen through God's signs (*āyāt Allāh*) in the cosmos, the Qur'ān, and in the human being. For the true Mu'tabir, realities of the hereafter are concretely experienced in this life. For instance, Ibn Barraĵān insisted that the idea of traversing the thin bridge over hell (*ṣirāṭ*) on Judgment Day should be experienced here and now, for the believer builds his bridge by his actions and spiritual states. Or again, quenching one's thirst at the Prophet's Pond (*ḥawḍ*) can be done in the herebelow by clinging to the guidance of revelation, and the sweetness of the beatific vision (*al-ru'ya al-karīma*) is anticipated by God's exclusive signs in the world, like sun and moon. Thus, Ibn Barraĵān saw God's associative signs in the universe, revelation, and man as open passageways into the next world which are accessible to every believer, provided he or she has mastered the art of deciphering the grace (*baraka*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) behind them.

Ibn Barraĵān's writings, which have been largely passed over in silence by modern scholars, or even dismissed as the derivative and preliminary thoughts of a secondary figure, deserve to be studied closely. At first glance, his oeuvre appears to be a work-in-progress, a loosely drafted stream of reflections, lacking the richness of Ibn 'Arabī's expositions and the clarity of Ghazālī's "Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*). Indeed, many scholars have made this point. A closer look at his ideas, however, reveal an outstanding, internally coherent, and original thinker who challenged the predominant religious discourse of his day, and whose unique hermeneutics and cosmological vision were absorbed by later codifiers of the Philosophical-Sufi tradition. But the richness, eclecticism, and subtlety of Ibn Barraĵān's teachings are easily overlooked by the hasty reader for two reasons. First, he usually dictated his works orally and quite unsystematically. Second, he never cited his sources or named his intellectual opponents. Ibn Barraĵān perhaps felt compelled by the intellectually rigid sixth-/twelfth-century Mālikī milieu to write with

³ Ibn Barraĵān, *Īdāh al-ḥikma*, eds. Böwering and Casewit, ¶910.

cautionary discretion and to conceal his intellectual affiliations and agenda. Moreover, he wanted his writings to appeal to a broad readership. Thus, names of his teachers and sources are deliberately omitted; his criticisms of other figures and groups are usually expressed in the third person; and he avoided terminological markers from works of Sufism, theology (*kalām*), the Brethren of Purity, and Ismā'īlī writings. Rather than locating himself within a particular school of thought, he found reference for his ideas in Qur'ānic verses, Hadīth, Biblical passages, and sayings of the Companions, and expressed them in ad hoc fashion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars of Islamic thought of the Iberian Peninsula have yet to develop a clear understanding of Ibn Barraġān's worldview for the simple reason that his works have up to recent years remained scattered in manuscript libraries.⁴ Fortunately, a number of Arabic text editions of Ibn Barraġān's works began to appear just as this current study was being prepared. The main thrust of secondary literature on Ibn Barraġān remains biographical. These newer scholarly inquiries, most recently by Bellver and Küçük, have refined our understanding of the important status which Ibn Barraġān enjoyed among his contemporaries in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus, as well as his role in shaping and disseminating mysticism in the region. However, such scholarly inquiries are noticeably dependent upon the patchy and often-conflicting data furnished by the medieval biographical sources. Ibn Barraġān's own works have yet to be analyzed as a whole. The over-dependence on biographical literature is problematic because the image of mysticism portrayed by biographers such as Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183) and Ibn al-Abbār (d. 638/1260) during the fifth to seventh-/eleventh to thirteenth-centuries in which Ibn Barraġān lived do not accurately reflect the actual unfolding of this tradition at the time.⁵ That is, the biographers distorted Ibn Barraġān's self-understanding of his own place within the Islamic tradition.⁶

Aside from biographical studies, many researchers who have dealt with Ibn Barraġān's thought have tendered largely unsubstantiated conjectures based on a very brief perusal of his works, or on contextual inferences

⁴ See the bibliography of this book for an overview of the excellent extant manuscript tradition of Ibn Barraġān.

⁵ *Urvoiy, Le monde des ulémas Andalous*, pp. 60, 63, 69, 73, 76, 79, 107, 108, 119, et seq.

⁶ See Chapters 2 and 3.

from studies of his contemporaries, Ibn al-‘Arīf and Ibn Qasī, and the history of the al-Murābiṭūn persecutions of mystics and theologians during the sixth/twelfth century. Asín Palacios, who first intuited that Ibn Barraĵān was influenced by the doctrines of Ibn Masarra, was remarkably accurate in his assessment but was unable to substantiate his claim textually. In the wake of Asín Palacios, scholars like Gharmīnī, Faure, Bell, and most recently Küçük echoed Goldziher’s narrative, which portrays Ibn Barraĵān as a receiver and propagator of Ghazālī’s ideas in al-Andalus.⁷ Others, in particular Gril and Bellver, have advanced our understanding of our author on his own grounds, but they have yet to take Ibn Barraĵān’s works and teachings into account as a whole.

Aside from important and commendable editorial groundwork undertaken by Arab researchers, scholarship on Ibn Barraĵān in Arabic secondary literature is generally poor and entangled in modern Atharī/Salafī versus Ash‘arī/Sufī polemics. Arab authors who have written about Ibn Barraĵān and the spread of Ash‘arism in the Maghrib, such as al-Qārī, Iḥnāna, and Hosni, have provided very informative insights on the period in general, and on Ibn Barraĵān’s biography and Qur’ānic hermeneutics in particular. However, these studies are guided by a prescriptive analysis of the tradition and are hampered by an unrelenting anachronistic attempt at reassuring the reader that Ibn Barraĵān was an orthodox Sunnī (*Ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*) however defined by the modern author.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 analyzes the complex and multilayered factors that set Andalusī mysticism in motion from the early third/ninth century to the sixth/twelfth century. These include the longstanding and popular Andalusī tradition of renunciation; the early mysticophilosophical school of Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) which had an enduring influence in later periods; the absorption of the broader body of Sunnī Ḥadīth and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) during the Umayyad and Tā’ifa period; polarizing epistemological rivalries over the miracles of saints (*karāmāt al-awliyā’*) and the legitimacy of mystics’ claims to esoteric knowledge by means of inner purification; and the burning of Ghazālī’s monumental “Revival of the Religious Sciences” (*Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*).

⁷ EI², “Ibn al-‘Arīf,” “Ibn Barraĵān,” and “Ibn Qasī” (A. Faure); Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 193; Bel, “Le Sufisme.”

Chapter 2 intervenes in the historiography of al-Andalus by challenging long-held assumptions about Ibn Barraġān and his peers' intellectual indebtedness to Ghazālī in the early sixth/twelfth century and by positing the existence of a self-consciously distinctive Mu'tabirūn mystical tradition with pronounced cosmological and occult leanings. This chapter demonstrates, based on the contents and chronology of Ibn Barraġān's works, that Ibn Barraġān was already an established author and a respected mystic before Ghazālī's writings were even introduced into al-Andalus. Ghazālī's influence on Ibn al-'Arīf and Ibn Qasī is also negligible, as evidenced by a close analysis of their life and writings. I argue that the transition to institutionalized "Sufism" in al-Andalus and North Africa thus took place approximately fifty years after the death of Ibn Barraġān and his peers, that is, at the turn of the sixth/twelfth to seventh/thirteenth century. This transition from an indigenous Andalusī mystical tradition – the Mu'tabirūn – to an institutionalized pan-Sunnī *ṭarīqa* Sufism was cemented by the self-consciously Sufi *ṭarīqa* movement of Abū Madyan as well as the North African Sufi hagiographers like Tādīlī's (d. 627/1230–1) *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl ahl al-taṣawwuf*.

Building on and supplementing previous biographical examinations of Ibn Barraġān, Chapter 3 analyzes Ibn Barraġān's life and works based upon not only the medieval biographies but also his own multivolume written corpus. Of special significance are Ibn Barraġān's early years, ancestral origins, formative education, the implications of his misunderstood epithet "Ghazālī of al-Andalus," his retreat from the city of Seville, and the scholarly output of his students. This chapter also features a discussion of Ibn Barraġān's political views on Muslim rulership, end-times, his summoning to Marrakesh for trial, and the obscure circumstances surrounding his incarceration and death.

For such a major figure in Islamic thought, it is surprising that the exact number, sequence, contents, and titles of Ibn Barraġān's works are a source of confusion in a large number of medieval and modern sources, which Chapter 4 explores. Ibn Barraġān articulated his teachings in four main works, of which only three have survived in full. The first, "The Guidebook to the Paths of Guidance" (*al-Irshād ilā subul al-rashād*), survives only partially in the Mamlūk scholar Zarkashī's *Burhān* and appears to be somewhat different in tone from his later works. The *Irshād* seeks to demonstrate the concordance or mutual overlap (*mu'āḍada*) between the Qur'ān and the Sunna by showing how each of the aḥādīth narrated by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* align in meaning with the Qur'ān. Ibn Barraġān's second work, "A Commentary on the Beautiful

Names of God” (*Sharḥ asmā Allāh al-ḥusnā*), is a voluminous commentary on the divine names. Each of the names receives a linguistic explanation, followed by a doctrinal analysis guided by the ubiquitous principle of *‘ibra*, and finally a practical word of spiritual advice (*ta‘abbud*, lit. practice of servanthood) in light of the divine name. The *Sharḥ* was enormously influential in al-Andalus and set the trend for a number of subsequent commentaries by other authors. The third work, “Alerting Intellects to Meditation on the Wise Book and Recognition of the Signs and the Tremendous Tiding [of Judgment Day]” (*Tanbīh al-afhām ilā tadabbur al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta‘arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba’ al-‘aẓīm*) is Ibn Barraĵān’s major commentary, which was supplemented by his final work, “Wisdom Deciphered, the Unseen Discovered” (*Īdāh al-ḥikma bi-ahkām al-‘ibra*, lit. “Deciphering Wisdom Through the Properties of the Crossing”). These two commentaries consist of Ibn Barraĵān’s free-flowing reflections on the divine Word. Remarkably, his entire body of surviving writings features very little doctrinal evolution, and can (or should) be read from beginning to end as a compositional whole.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 respectively address Ibn Barraĵān’s cosmology, Qur’ānic hermeneutics, usage of the Bible as doctrinal proof-text, and his conception of cyclical time and divine decree. Chapter 4 lies at the heart of this book since his cosmological doctrines profoundly shape his approach to the Qur’ān and spiritual practices. Ibn Barraĵān’s cosmological doctrines, moreover, foreground Ibn ‘Arabī’s worldview to a remarkable degree and mark one of the earliest extensive engagements with the Neoplatonizing teachings of the Brethren of Purity in Sunnī mysticism. This chapter begins with an analysis of the idea of the Universal Servant (*al-‘abd al-kullī*), from which everything in existence unfolds. The Universal Servant, which anticipates Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), is an all-comprehensive reality that is neither divine nor part of creation. The world and man derive their form (*ṣūra*) and existence (*wujūd*) from the reality of the Universal Servant. Since the Universal Servant is also equated with the symbolism of the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), it also stands as the source of divine revelation. From the Universal Servant comes Ibn Barraĵān’s principle of associative correspondence between the universe as a composite whole, man as an individual, and the Qur’ān as a sonoral revelation.

This chapter also examines Ibn Barraĵān’s famous concept of “The Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created” (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*, ḤMBK), which marks the sum-total of God’s presence in the world through His signs (*āyāt*) and traces (*āthār*). ḤMBK anticipates

God's full disclosure on Judgment Day, which he refers to as "The Clear Reality" (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*) and as "The Real to Whom Is the Return" (*al-ḥaqq alladhī ilayhi al-maṣīr*). Following the doctrine of HMBK, I turn to Ibn Barrajān's ontology, which stresses the hierarchical multilayeredness and fundamental oneness of existence (*wujūd*). Ibn Barrajān anchors his ontology by drawing on Qur'ānic references to the "hidden object" (*khab'*) of existence which reveals itself in the hereafter, as well as in the Ḥadīth-inspired notion of the "Two Breaths" (*al-fayḥān*) of heaven and hell from which the spring's cool breezes and summer's heat waves issue. Occasionally, Ibn Barrajān resorts to philosophical discussions of Imaginal existence (*al-wujūd al-mithālī*) to explain the continuous nature of existence in a world of becoming and decay. These discussions anticipate the notion of Imaginal existence (*al-wujūd al-khayālī*) in later Sufi-Philosophical works. Finally, I examine Ibn Barrajān's discussions of the signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*), and especially sun, moon, and water, which present open passageways into the unseen world for the believer to behold.

Ibn Barrajān's major Qur'ān commentary is one of the most important exegetical works produced in the Muslim West, which I examine in Chapter 6. It differs markedly in approach, organizational pattern, and doctrinal orientation from previous tafsīrs in the region. He advocated an unprecedented hermeneutic of total immersion into the universe of the Qur'ān and signs in nature, and his approach to interpreting the Qur'ān is remarkably aligned with his cosmology. Virtually all of his Qur'ānic technical terms, exegetical opinions, and hermeneutical doctrines are anchored in a literal reading of the Qur'ān, are worked out within his cosmological scheme, and expressed in the language of differentiation (*tafsīl*) and nondifferentiation (*ijmāl*). Ibn Barrajān goes squarely against the Sunnī tafsīr tradition in almost each of his main hermeneutical doctrines.

This chapter is built around three parts that define Ibn Barrajān's hermeneutics, namely harmony, hierarchy, and hegemony of the Qur'ān. Section I examines Ibn Barrajān's vision of the Qur'ān as a harmonious, coherent, and unambiguous text. Ibn Barrajān rejects any notion of Qur'ānic ambiguity (*ishtibāh*) and proclaims that ambiguity lies in the eye of the reader, not in revelation. Consequently, his approach to the Qur'ān is governed by the principle of *nazm*, that is, the compositional harmony and structural orderliness of the Qur'ān. His engagement with this theme also marks one of the earliest extensive engagements by a Qur'ānic exegete with this topic. Ibn Barrajān stressed the doctrine of

nazm in his writings since he saw the Qur'ān and the universe as two copies of each other: two complementary beings (*wujūdān*). In his vision of things, the Two Beings derive their respective forms from the Universal Servant (*al-'abd al-kullī*). Thus Ibn Barraġān believed that every Qur'ānic verse (*āya*) is divinely placed in the revealed book for a specific purpose, just as every particle of creation is placed with a purpose in creation and reflects God in a specific way. The doctrine of *nazm* has many consequences for Ibn Barraġān's Qur'ānic hermeneutics. He held each of the Qur'ānic sūras to be structured around a specific theme. Ibn Barraġān was also a staunch opponent of the doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*) of Qur'ānic verses by others. He reasoned that since every verse of the Qur'ān is located in a specific position by God, two verses can only abrogate one another if the abrogated (*mansūkh*) verse is followed by an adjacent abrogating (*nāsikh*) verse.

Section II analyses Ibn Barraġān's conception of the Qur'ān as a multilayered revelation, which contains both verses that are "all-encompassing" (*mujmal*) and others that are "differentiated" (*mufaṣṣal*). Ibn Barraġān conceived of the Qur'ān as containing two layers. The first, which he called the Supreme Qur'ān (*al-qur'ān al-'azīm*), comprises the holistic, or all-comprehensive (*mujmal*), verses that engulf the entire meaning of the revelation. From the Supreme Qur'ān emerge the differentiated verses (*āyāt mufaṣṣala*), which Ibn Barraġān identified as the Exalted Qur'ān (*al-qur'ān al-'azīz*). Moreover, certain sūras, like 1 and 2, are also held by Ibn Barraġān to embrace the Qur'ān's message as a whole. Ibn Barraġān defines the so-called *muhkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses not as "clear" or "unambiguous" verses in contrast to the "ambiguous" verses. Rejecting any ambiguity, he identifies the former as "compact/fixed" (*muhkam*) verses that are sunk in the Preserved Tablet, like roots sunk in the soil of nonmanifestation. The *mutashābihāt* verses, for their part, are mutually resembling, or "consimilar" (rather than confused), verses and constitute the bulk of the revelation.

Section III examines the primacy of the Qur'ān in Ibn Barraġān's scholarly approach. Ibn Barraġān saw the Qur'ān as the yardstick against which all other bodies of knowledge, from weak Ḥadīth to Biblical material, are to be assessed. This hermeneutical principle is expansive, since it allows for the author to integrate any wisdom literature that he deems to complement the Qur'ān: it is never used to exclude texts from his interpretive framework. This section thus examines Ibn Barraġān's use of the Qur'ān to explain itself, as well as his use of weak Ḥadīth to shed light on Qur'ānic teachings.

Ibn Barraĵān was surprisingly liberal in his usage of Biblical material to bolster his Qur'ānic and mystical teachings, as shown in Chapter 7. He drew primarily from Genesis and the Book of Matthew, quoting Biblical passages on par with Ḥadīth. This chapter explores the various techniques he used to reconcile perceived scriptural incongruities, and offers a comparison between Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn Ḥazm's (d. 456/1064) engagement with the Bible.

The final chapter sheds light on the author's understanding of *i'tibār*, cycles of time, the divine command, and future predictions, which are a direct application of his cosmological and hermeneutical teachings. I examine the central idea of *i'tibār*, the "crossing" into the invisible realm, with a comparison to Ibn Masarra's *i'tibār*. The crossing is at once an intellectual act of contemplating the heavens with the eye of correspondence, as well as a spiritual practice of anticipating the realities of the hereafter through their presence in this world.

The *'ibra* in Ibn Barraĵān's works has far-reaching consequences. If it is possible to have access to the unseen realities of the hereafter, he reasons that the lines of demarcation that separate the visible from the unseen are much less rigid than they appear. Ibn Barraĵān pushes the boundaries of the unseen, arguing that the unseen world (*'ālam al-ghayb*) is a relative category. Most radically, he advocates for the permissibility of peering into the future. This chapter ends with an analysis of Ibn Barraĵān's famous Jerusalem prediction, in which he accurately prognosticates the Muslim recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in the year 583/1187 by applying his understanding of the cyclical nature of time and divine determination (*dawā'ir al-taqdīr*) to the opening verses of sūra 30 (Rūm).

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE AL-MURĀBIṬŪN DYNASTY

The life of Ibn Barraĵān and his peers span approximately from mid-fifth/eleventh century to the early sixth/twelfth century, paralleling closely the historical rise and demise of the al-Murābiṭūn regime (r. 454–541/1062–1147). The writings, life circumstances, and political views of these figures were molded by the ethnically stratified, economically challenged, and tension-ridden society of al-Andalus. Therefore a brief historical survey is indispensable here, in anticipation of Chapters 1–2, which examine the rise of these figures to prominence in al-Andalus.

The story of the al-Murābiṭūn is intimately linked to the so-called *tāʾifa* period when al-Andalus broke up into dozens of competing regional principalities (*mulūk al-tawāʾif*). The *tāʾifa* kings rose to power after the collapse of the illustrious Umayyad Caliphate, a regime that had asserted control over large segments of the Iberian Peninsula from the mid-second/eighth century to fifth/eleventh century. The forces which gave rise to the *tāʾifas* were diverse. In many cases, *tāʾifas* were founded by community leaders with recognized social influence, or by former members of the civil and military structures of Umayyad authority, and sometimes even opportunistic governors or judges (sing. *qāḍī*) driven by personal ambition. Typically, it was the leading members of long-established aristocratic families with strong ties to the Umayyad dynasty who stepped in to fill the political vacuum.⁸ One of the most important of these families were the Banū ʿAbbād, who claimed Seville as their capital. The *tāʾifa* of Seville provided refuge for Ibn Barraĵān's North African Lakhmī grandfather, and it is here that our author grew up. The *tāʾifa* of Seville was founded by Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl ʿAbbād (d. 433/1041), a judge (*qāḍī*) who assumed political leadership and established himself as ruler of the Banū ʿAbbād. As a Lakhmī Arab, his clan wielded both political and religious supremacy in Seville up to the al-Murābiṭūn conquest. The cohesive and centralized polity which he founded enjoyed an agrarian economy which surpassed the maritime economies of the coastal cities. By the fifth/eleventh century, the Banū ʿAbbād came close to annexing the entire southwestern regions of al-Andalus.⁹

The *tāʾifas* represented a fragmented prolongation of Umayyad authority rather than a new model of political authority. In the absence of a unifying caliph, the emirs assumed authoritative titles and symbols, oversaw the continuation of important socioeconomic institutions, and patronized the outstanding scholarly and artistic achievements of the fifth/eleventh century.¹⁰ At the same time, the *tāʾifas* were also internally divisive and often found themselves militarily, economically, politically, and ideologically threatened by the northern and northwestern Christian

⁸ For a careful analysis of the forces that gave rise to the *tāʾifas*, see F. Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité*, pp. 203–224.

⁹ See Guichard and Soravia, *Les royaumes de Taifas*, pp. 72–78 for more on the expansion of the ʿAbbādid *tāʾifa* in southern al-Andalus; and pp. 196–207 for an analysis of the armies of Seville, its composition, expansionism, power, and use of non-Arab mercenaries.

¹⁰ Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité*, pp. 305–307.

kingdoms of Aragon and Castile.¹¹ The *tā'ifas*' imposition of noncanonical taxes (*maghārim*) on their disgruntled subjects to fund northern military campaigns (*jihād*) or to pay annual tributes (Sp. *parias*) to Christian rulers enraged religious scholars and tax-paying commoners alike. Meanwhile, the Christian *Reconquista* of the Peninsula was in full swing. In 477/1085, Toledo, the ancient capital of the Visigoths at the heart of Iberia, fell to King Alfonso VI. This defeat was symbolically, psychologically, and militarily devastating and rendered the *tā'ifas* ever more vulnerable to attack.¹² The fall of Toledo was a rude awakening that reminded Andalusī of their urgent need for a strong central authority. It is in this context that the powerful al-Murābiṭūn were summoned to al-Andalus by both jurists and *tā'ifa* rulers.¹³

The *tā'ifas* were failed states because they were unable to fill the power vacuum which resulted from the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate. The Umayyads came to represent a yardstick of measurement for the political failures and successes of every Muslim regime that attempted to control al-Andalus. Only they were able to assert religiopolitical supremacy over the tension-ridden tribal society of Umayyad Spain, garnering enough authority to pose as Caliphs (*khalīfa*) of all Muslims in the fourth/tenth century on par with the 'Abbāsids and Fāṭimids. The Umayyad downfall left a profound political vacuum known as the "*imāmate* crisis," which was expressed not only in the very structure of the *tā'ifas*, but also in tempestuous political debates over the qualifications and candidacy for Muslim leadership (*imāma*). This crisis of authority outlasted the *tā'ifas* themselves, and beset Andalusī and North African regimes and scholars for centuries.¹⁴

Numerous unworkable solutions were tendered in the *tā'ifa* period. The powerful Banū 'Abbād in Seville where Ibn Barraĵān's family settled, for instance, retained a fictional association with the phony Umayyad Caliph Hishām II al-Mu'ayyad whom they themselves drummed up.¹⁵ At the same time, the Banū Ḥammūd, a prominent ruling family in Malaga with claims to a noble Idrīsī lineage stretching back to the Prophet Muḥammad, asserted themselves as possessors of caliphal

¹¹ Guichard and Soravia, *Les royaumes de Taifas* pp. 107–112 for pressure on the *tā'ifas* from the Christian north.

¹² Makki, "The political history of al-Andalus," p. 61.

¹³ *El²*, "Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if," (M. Morony and D. Wasserstein).

¹⁴ Fierro, "The qāḍī as ruler," p. 87.

¹⁵ Guichard and Soravia, *Les royaumes de Taifas*, p. 29.

authority.¹⁶ Various regional kings also boasted increasingly grandiose titles of rulership.¹⁷ When the al-Murābiṭūn emirs rose to power, they adopted the compromise title of *Commander of Muslims* (instead of the caliphal title *Commander of Believers*, *amīr al-mu'minīn*, which was reserved for the 'Abbāsids), upheld a nominal allegiance to the 'Abbāsī Caliph in Baghdād, and bolstered their own religious legitimacy by sponsoring Mālikī jurists.

Andalusī scholars were in equal disagreement as to how the authority crisis could be resolved. The Zāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), for instance, served as vizier to two pretenders in Valencia and Cordoba, for he was convinced that the caliph had to be Arab, Qurayshī, Umayyad, anti-Shī'ī, devoted to the service of God, and a non-ally of Christians and Jews, especially with regard to their incorporation into governmental positions.¹⁸ The Mālikī jurist Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081), for his part, held that an unjust sultan was preferable to political disunity and civil strife (*fitna*).¹⁹ Radical millenarianists like Ibn Qasī revolted against the ruling power and proclaimed themselves as Mahdī. The renunciant and mystic Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī (d. 432/1040), for his part, collected the alms (*zakāt*) from his community of followers, whereas Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037) and Ibn Barrajan proclaimed that virtue and moral excellence (*faḍīla*), not genealogical lineage, should be the criteria for choosing an imām of the community.²⁰

It is in this shaky context that the al-Murābiṭūn were summoned to Spain. A Ṣanhāja Berber dynasty that burst out of the deep southern Saharan stretches of present-day Mauritania, Mali, and Río de Oro (*al-sāqiya al-ḥamrā'*), they conquered first the Maghrib and established their capital in Marrakesh. As they gained ground in North Africa, the beleaguered *ṭā'ifa* ruler of Badajoz 'Umar al-Mutawakkil b. al-Aḥṣa summoned the military forces of the emir Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (r. 453–500/1061–1107) to al-Andalus to halt the increasingly militant attacks of Alfonso VI. Appeals of enlistment were also addressed to the al-Murābiṭūn by al-Mu'tamid b. 'Abbād of Seville and Ibn Buluqqīn

¹⁶ For a recent and concise study that sheds light on the political and caliphal claims of the Ḥammūdī rulers on the basis of numismatic evidence, see Rosado Llamas' *La dinastía Hammudí*.

¹⁷ Fierro, "The qāḍī as ruler," pp. 104–105.

¹⁸ Fierro, "Unidad religiosa," p. 400. For a study of medieval scholarly debates over the employment of non-Muslim state officials, see Yarbrough, "Islamizing the Islamic State."

¹⁹ Fierro, "Unidad religiosa," p. 399. ²⁰ Fierro, "The qāḍī as ruler," p. 104–105.

(r. 465–482/1073–1090) of Granada.²¹ After consulting with jurists of Fez,²² Yūsuf's Ṣanhāja forces overwhelmed Alfonso VI's Castilian troops in a northbound push and defeated them at the battle of Sagrajas (*Zallāqa*) in 478/1086. They recovered Lisbon and Santarem, put an end to the *paria* tribute taxes, then returned to Marrakesh.²³ But things soon got worse. Once again, Andalusī scholars and the general populace grew weary of the *tā'ifas*' petty factionalism and their inability to halt Christian advancement, and sent letters of appeal to Marrakesh pleading for a second intervention.²⁴ In 483/1090, the illustrious emir sought to put an end to the continual disputes of the *tā'ifas* and their concessions with the Christian monarchs. Backed yet again by a *fatwa* which not only permitted but obliged emir Yūsuf to invade the dissolute, *paria*-paying regional tyrants, he proceeded to dethrone every *tā'ifa* and established Cordoba as capital of his Andalusī protectorate.²⁵

The al-Murābiṭūn annexation of al-Andalus was welcomed by locals. It was carried out in collaboration with the clerical class on both sides of the Straits. The pragmatic Andalusī judges (sing. *qādī*) generally favored a strong, religiously rigorous central authority,²⁶ and turned against their weakened patrons in support of the foreign North African intervention.²⁷

²¹ Urvoy, *Pensers d'Al-Andalus*, p. 16.

²² Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, II, pp. 77–78; See also Nāṣirī, *Istiḡṣā'*, II, pp. 30–50.

²³ EI2, "Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if," (M. Morony & D. Wasserstein).

²⁴ Ibn Buluqqīn, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 125–127. See also Sa'īd A'rāb, *Ma'a al-Qādī*, p. 11.

²⁵ The takeover was rapid in some areas, gradual in others. It began with Granada, Almería and Seville in 484/1091. The Banū Hūd of Sargossa resisted the al-Murābiṭūn until 504/1110 but fell to the Christians within eight years. Valencia, which had been seized by the Cid in 478/1085 was captured by the emir in 495/1102. Badajoz was last to fall to the al-Murābiṭūn. Only Muḥammad b. Ghaniyya and his dynasty, the Banū Ghaniyya, remained in power in the Balearic Islands until the late sixth/twelfth century.

²⁶ In comparison with the Umayyad Caliphal period, the Mālikī judges were arguably less powerful in the *tā'ifa* period. They enjoyed great prominence and authority under the Umayyads, especially from the mid-fourth/tenth century onward when 'Abd al-Rahmān III proclaimed himself caliph in 316/929 in opposition to the Fāṭimī (r. 296/909–566/1171) and the Abbāsī caliphates. This bold political proclamation by 'Abd al-Rahmān III brought with it closer alliance with the Mālikī *fuqahā'*. With the disintegration of centralized authority, the loyalty of the delegated judges to the divisive *tā'ifa* rulers was one of expedience. See Monès, "Le rôle des hommes de religion," pp. 47–88.

²⁷ In Granada for instance, Ibn Qulay'ī (d. 498/1104) and Ibn Sahl (d. 486/1093) pledged allegiance to the al-Murābiṭūn, sided against their *tā'ifa* king Ibn Buluqqīn, and joined forces with the Sevillian jurist Abū Qāsim al-Hawzānī (d. 512/1118) in the conquest of the Granadan *tā'ifa*. (Ibn Buluqqīn, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 125–127. See also Sa'īd A'rāb, *Ma'a al-Qādī*, p. 11.) Similarly, Ibn al-Aḥṣan was instrumental in the establishment of the al-Murābiṭūn in his city of Badajoz. (El Hour, "The al-Andalus qādī," p. 79.) El Hour, *ibid*, p. 80, speculates that the al-Murābiṭūn takeover of al-Andalus in concert with the jurists

The desert monarchs held sway over their Andalusī protectorate from the second-half of the fifth/eleventh century to the first-half of the sixth/twelfth century, and were overthrown by the al-Muwahhidūn revolutionaries in 539/1145, only three years after Ibn Barraġān's death. Their position in al-Andalus was validated by their military strength and religious rigor. This meant that they were expected to consolidate the shrinking northern and northwestern borders, "re-Islamicize" the Peninsula by abolishing maligned noncanonical taxes (*qaṭ' al-maghārim*), and bolstering the power of local Mālikī judges.²⁸ The *Emir of the Muslims* also asserted religious orthodoxy by denigrating "good-old" Umayyad culture and paying a symbolic tribute to the 'Abbāsīd Sunnī Caliph in Baghdād.

Andalusīs enjoyed several decades of economic prosperity under their new Berber protectors. There were also initial military successes, including the victory at Uclés in 502/1108. But even at their peak, the nomadic Berber dynasty was never quite at home in al-Andalus. Despite the al-Murābiṭūn's military prowess, they had no experience in the long-distance administration of a vast, urban-based, and loosely connected Arabo-Islamic empire. They outsourced day-to-day bureaucratic management of al-Andalus to local officials whose authority they reinforced by their military presence. This bifurcation of administrative power structure resulted in fractious tensions. For in contrast to their earlier Khārijī-like tribal egalitarianism, emir 'Alī b. Yūsuf's third-generation al-Murābiṭūn troops evolved into a warrior aristocracy who were becoming increasingly softened by the plentiful luxuries of Iberia. Removed from desert life, they lost their combative edge, discipline, and endurance. All they retained of their rugged homeland was an obstinate group solidarity (*'aṣabiyya*), which, in the context of the refined urban Andalusī society, proved detrimental. Rather than earning the abiding loyalty of native administrators and aristocracies by integrating Andalusīs into the new elite, they excluded new tribal elements from their caste. They went so far as to limit the very name *Murābiṭūn* to the founding Lamtūna, Massūfa, and Gudāla tribes, and entrusted key posts to their clansmen. In early sixth-/twelfth-century Seville, only the "true" al-Murābiṭūn were afforded the prestige of donning the awe-inspiring dark mouth-veil (*liṭhām*) of the

was planned from the very beginning, since 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn had allegedly spent seven years studying in al-Andalus during the *tā'ifa* period where he gained deep acquaintance with the sociopolitical dynamics of the time; however, Ibn Yāsīn's presence in al-Andalus was most likely legendary, as demonstrated by M. Fierro, "Entre el Magreb y al-Andalus," p. 117.

²⁸ Fierro, "The qāḍī as ruler," pp. 104–105.

desert monarchs.²⁹ Thus, despite their initial reception as saviors of al-Andalus, the al-Murābiṭūn were soon perceived as a military dictatorship of uncouth Berbers. The sophisticated and “high-maintenance” Andalusī, for their part, soon began to look back nostalgically at the good-old-*tāʾifa*-days, and expressed their longing for that golden age in prose and poetry.

By the second-half of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf’s reign, meeting Andalusī expectations of military defense, peace, low taxes, and economic prosperity became increasingly challenging. Replenishing troops from the far-off Sahara for service in the borders of *dār al-islām* against Christian aggression was logistically difficult and financially expensive. The emir tried to keep pace with his father’s aggressive jihād, and even instituted positive economic reforms in the region. But in 512/1108, Alfonso I of Aragon, “El Batallador” (The Warrior) captured Saragossa with support from the crusading nobles of southern France and the blessings of Pope Gelasius II. Worse still, ʿAlī was at a disadvantage. For in 515/1121, the al-Muwaḥḥidūn messianic ideologue Ibn Tūmart (d. ca. 522/1128) led a Maṣmūda revolt in the Sūs mountains of southern Morocco. This revolt put the al-Murābiṭūn on the defensive and they could only afford to fund a defensive line of forts along the northern Andalusī borders.

In order to maintain the jihād, the al-Murābiṭūn levied noncanonical taxes (*maghārim*), from which they initially had promised to liberate Andalusī.³⁰ In accordance with Qurʾānic injunctions, Muslims in principle are only obliged to pay the *zakāt*, while non-Muslims were to pay a poll tax (*jizya*). But conversions to Islam had diminished the state revenue, and the al-Murābiṭūn, like their predecessors, were forced to impose religiously unsanctioned *maghārim*, such as land tax (*kharāj*) customs dues, upon Muslim and non-Muslim merchants alike. This juridically condemned policy was so odious to the Muslim-majority populace that the regime hired third-party Christian mercenaries to exact these taxes.³¹ Many scholars, including Ibn Barraġān, voiced their opposition to these taxes in their writings and *fatwās*. Moreover, the general political and socioeconomic corruption triggered a series of revolts in the provinces. By 525/1131, Andalusī opposition to the al-Murābiṭūn was so strong that Sayf al-Dawla b. Hūd broke away from the al-Murābiṭūn and forged an alliance with Alfonso VII.

²⁹ Meier, “Almoravids and Marabouts,” in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, p. 394.

³⁰ Fierro, “Unidad religiosa,” p. 403. ³¹ Messier, “Re-thinking the Almoravids,” p. 74.

‘Alī b. Yūsuf’s competent but ill-fated successor Tāshufīn b. ‘Alī held on to the reigns of power for only two years, from 537–539/1143–1145. Al-Muwaḥḥidūn rebellions led by ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. ‘Alī raged between Fez and Tlemcen. The rebels formed a military ring south of Marrakesh which obstructed communication lines between the capital and the Sahara. Tāshufīn b. ‘Alī was killed in Wahrān in 539/1145, and in 541/1147 ‘Abd al-Mu’min captured the capital city of Marrakesh. In al-Andalus, an insurmountable revolt shook the capital of Cordoba in 538/1143, after which most of al-Andalus reservedly acknowledged the al-Muwaḥḥidūn. In 543/1148, the last of the al-Murābiṭūn governors in the western Andalusī provinces, Yaḥyā b. Ghāniya al-Massūfī, died. However, Muḥammad b. Ghāniya, an al-Murābiṭūn claimant, established the Banū Ghaniyya dynasty in Palma which held sway over the Balearic Islands until 582/1187.

This summary of the political history of the al-Murābiṭūn in Iberia provides the context against which the originality and significance of Ibn Barraĵān’s scholarly contributions can be fully appreciated in Chapters 1 and 2. The decline of the al-Murābiṭūn marked a key transitional phase of Andalusī history and molded many of the religious, social, and political positions that Ibn Barraĵān adopted in his writings. Religiously, for instance, his teachings were developed and articulated in the shadow of the state-sponsored Mālikī jurists (*fuqahā’*) and judges (*quḍāt*) who gained enormous influence under the al-Murābiṭūn. Ibn Barraĵān very often preached and wrote in response to the predominant religious discourse of these powerful scholars, a discourse which he indirectly sought to challenge, mold, and broaden. At a social level, Ibn Barraĵān’s withdrawal into the backlands of Seville marked not only his physical, but also sociopolitical and intellectual distancing from the mainstream religious discourse and structures of power. Instead of subjecting himself to the scrutiny of jurists, he preferred to live in free solitude as a *munqabiḍ* or a renunciant “retreater” (*munqabiḍūn*, lit. “those who withdraw from the political sphere”), avoiding both roles of social leadership and popular ascendancy, and shunning all forms of political cooperation with the state. Finally, Ibn Barraĵān’s cynical and sometimes millenarian politics and expectations of end-times surface in his later works in response to the grave failures of the al-Murābiṭūn to secure peace and prosperity for Andalusīs. His poignant criticisms of the regime for failing to defend its northern borders from Christian encroachment, levying noncanonical taxes (*maghārim*) from Andalusīs, and cooperating with non-Muslim politicians speaks of the political climate of his day.

I

The Beginnings of a Mystical Discourse in al-Andalus

*Ibn Masarra, Mālikism, and the Politics
of an Epistemological Debate*

INTRODUCTION

Much of the early history and doctrinal development of mysticism in al-Andalus during the early and formative periods (fourth–sixth/tenth–twelfth centuries) remains unknown. This lacuna results from the fact that several key works have been lost, and a number of reliable Arabic critical editions have only very recently been published. Moreover, in-depth monograph studies of individual representatives of this period are scarce, and the pioneering efforts of Asín Palacios, Nwyia, and more recently by Dreher, Urvoy, Fierro, Cornell, Garden, Serrano Ruano, and Ebstein, among others have yet to bring this subject into full light. Building upon previous efforts, this chapter sketches the contours of Islamic mysticism on the Iberian Peninsula during its early stage of development. The religious, social, and political factors of this period anticipate the sixth-/twelfth-century mystical tradition which will be analyzed in Chapter 2. The early and formative periods discussed below helped shape the distinct intellectual world out of which the seminal Andalusī school of philosophical Sufism emerged, espoused by figures such as Ibn ʿArabī (d. 637/1240), Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 668/1270), and Shushtarī (d. 667/1269), as well as North Africans such as Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241) and Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291).

The beginnings of Andalusī mystical discourse can be detected in the writings of various ascetics or renunciants (*zuhhād*), discussed in Section I. This movement of law-abiding and austere pietists evolved parallel to the intellectually inclined mystical tradition and harks back to the earliest third-/ninth-century phase of Andalusī history. While not all renunciants were mystically inclined, all mystics were closely associated

with renunciation. Within approximately one hundred years, i.e., by the mid-Umayyad period, renunciants established their own rural convents (sing. *ribāt*), private centers of instruction, and flocked to cities such as Seville where they studied the works of Eastern Sufis such as Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Saqāṭī (d. 253/867), Tustarī (d. 283/896), Junayd (d. 298/910), and Abū Saʿīd b. al-Aʿrābī (d. 341/952). Most renunciants were pacifists who withdrew from the court (*inqibāḍ ʿan al-sulṭān*) and eschewed state patronage. However, this movement as a whole enjoyed popular ascendancy and posed a threat to dominant structures of political power and religious authority during times of instability. Renunciants harbored antigovernmental tendencies, even the potential for counterpolitical revolution, and were associated in biographical works with the so-called “Retreaters” (*munqabiḍūn*), that is, “those who withdrew from state power” (*inqibāḍ ʿan al-sulṭān*). They represented a trend of conscientious, quietist resistance to the religiopolitical hegemony of Mālikī jurists in al-Andalus and expressed their opposition to the state-jurist entente by refusing to serve as judges (*qāḍīs*) for the emir. Retreaters were held by the masses in high esteem for their sincerity and included great scholars, renunciants, and mystics among their ranks.

Section II examines the seminal figure Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī (d. 319/931), a renunciant with connections to the retreaters’ movement who deserves to be called the “father of Andalusī mysticism.” His doctrinal interests went beyond the conventional practices of his peers, and his teachings left an indelible mark on subsequent generations of Andalusī mystics. Drawing on a variety of sources including the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, Eastern Sufi works, Neoplatonic cosmology, and personal inspiration, Ibn Masarra expressed a syncretic worldview in a sophisticated language of cosmology, symbolism, contemplation (*iʿtibār*), the science of the letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*), and inner interpretation of the Qurʾān (*taʿwīl*). Although his followers failed to gain popular momentum, they were remarkably resilient in the face of political crackdowns and staunch Mālikī opposition. Ibn Masarra’s teachings represented an early competing alternative to the religious universe defined by the Mālikī ʿulamāʾ and jeopardized the existing balance of religious authority in the Peninsula. In the Umayyad period, his followers were already implicated in a broad and politicized epistemological debate over the possibility of “saints’ evidentiary miracles” (*karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*) and the “acquisition of prophecy” through spiritual realization (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*). Despite all odds, they continued to develop as an uninterrupted oral and written tradition throughout

the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh centuries, culminating in the seminal intellectual formulations of the sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī mystics.

The hallmark, and indeed the single common denominator that underpins the teachings of Ibn Masarra and his followers, is the concept of *‘ibrah i‘tibār*, a word that stems from the root ‘-B-R, or “crossing.” The *‘ibrah* is the mystic’s experience of the hereafter in this life through his grasping of the celestial realities imbedded in the signs of God throughout existence. In the medieval sources, Ibn Masarra’s followers were known as “Masarrīs” (*masarriyya*). This eponymous label, however, was by no means their self-designation. They self-identified not as Massaris, philosophers, or Sufis, but as Mu‘tabirūn or “Contemplatives” (lit. practitioners of the crossing into the unseen world) and are referred to as such throughout this study.

In contrast to the renunciants and the Mu‘tabirūn, the Mālikī intelligentsia enjoyed the sponsorship of Umayyad, *ṭā’ifa*, and al-Murābiṭūn emirs. They wielded enormous influence in the politically fragmented, militarily beleaguered, economically unstable, and ethnically stratified territories of al-Andalus. Most emirs (and especially the al-Murābiṭūn) sought to use Mālikism as a unifying religiopolitical force by integrating jurists into the state apparatus. The political utility of Mālikism buttressed the long-standing state-jurist entente in al-Andalus, which posed a formidable challenge to the flowering of Andalusī mystical discourse.

Tensions between Mālikī authorities and the ruling emirs on the one hand, and renunciants, retreaters, and the Mu‘tabirūn on the other, reached new heights in 495/1102. That year marks the influx of the works of the great Persian scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) into the orbit of Andalusī scholarship, as discussed in Section III. His integrative and monumental “Revival of the Religious Sciences” (*Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*) quite literally caught fire in the thoroughly Mālikised regions of al-Andalus. Within only eight years, i.e., 503/1109, copies of the *Iḥyā’* and other Ghazālian works were put to the torch in the courtyard of the grand mosque of Cordoba. Some thirty years later, a second book-burning took place. During these three crucial decades, Ghazālī’s spiritualizing vision of Islam reinforced mystics with a set of arguments against state-jurists and supplied them with a vast treasury of Sufi guidance. More importantly, however, was the *Iḥyā’*’s function as a sociopolitical rallying point for an alternative source of religious authority. Its syncretism was embraced by an already entrenched camp of renunciants and mystics of the al-Murābiṭūn period and catalyzed the formation of an Andalusī mystical group identity. Around the turn of

the fifth–sixth/eleventh–twelfth century, Andalusī mysticism acquired a distinctive self-image, and the formative mystics, Ibn Barraġān (d. 536/1141), Ibn al-‘Arīf (d. 536/1141), and Ibn Qasī (d. 545/1151), who will be dealt with in Chapter 2, rose to prominence.

I RENUNCIATION

The Early Umayyad Period

The study of Andalusī mysticism is complicated by the fact that a considerable percentage of figures who were classified by biographers of the Muslim West as “Sufi” were actually practitioners of asceticism, or renunciants (*zuhhād*) of worldly pleasure. Further, the distinction between praxis-centered renunciation and philosophical mysticism is difficult to demarcate because most mystics, beginning with Ibn Masarra, combined the behavioral orientation of renunciation with mystical expositions.¹ It is useful to remember, by way of demarcation between these two trends, that it was always the ascetic’s personification of outstanding virtue and outward orthopraxy as defined by Mālikī ethics not inner belief and lofty metaphysics, that made him or her stand out among coreligionists. Moreover, the tradition of renunciation was broader, older, and more doctrinally conservative than mysticism. Its luminaries were typified in hagiographical works by heroic piety, denouncing worldly pleasure, and combating the passions of the lower soul (*nafs*). Some were even great legal scholars who internalized the teachings of the *Sharī‘a* to such a remarkable extent that they were crowned by biographers, especially in later centuries, as “people of [religious] knowledge and practice” (*ahl al-‘ilm wa-l-‘amal*). The range of descriptive titles for renunciants is indicative of distinctions made by biographers between various prototypes and tendencies within this pietist tradition. Qualifying adjectives such as “precautious” (*wari*), “worshiper” (*‘ābid*), “devout” (*nāsik*), “abstinent” (*mutabattil*), “detached” (*munqaṭi*), and “self-mortifying” (*mutaqashshif*) often appear in association with these figures and are even used as honorifics (*laqab*) in their onomastic chains.²

Unfortunately, much of the biographical and literary output by or on Andalusī renunciants has not survived, and relatively few excerpts have

¹ Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas*, pp. 37–39. See also Asín Palacios, “Abenmasarra y su escuela,” in *Obras escogidas*.

² Marín, “Zuhhād of al-Andalus,” p. 105. For a discussion of definitions, trends, and practices of *zuhd* in early Sunnism, see Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety*, pp. 105–110.

been preserved by Eastern authors. However, there is no doubt that Andalusī *zuhd* was more vigorous a movement than we can infer from extant texts. The renunciants enjoyed a high standing in Andalusī society among scholars and laymen alike.³ Traces of their social prominence can be gleaned already in the second/eighth century, for instance, in the life of Imām Mālik's own disciple Shabṭūn (d. 194/809) who was a close associate of the Umayyad emir Hishām I (r. 172–180/788–796). But in contrast to Shabṭūn's political conformism, renunciants often stood in moral-political opposition to the state. The great Moroccan jurist and Ḥadīth scholar, Qāḍī 'Iyād (d. 544/1149), gives an account of a large group (up to 140) of notables, jurists and renunciants in Cordoba who were so infuriated by al-Ḥakam b. Hishām's (r. 180–206/796–822) scandalous lifestyle and public consumption of alcohol that they conspired to dethrone him in 189/805. Their plot was foiled, however, and seventy-two conspirators were executed and impaled along the Raṣīf promenade of Cordoba. Public opinion of the emir, which was already low on account of his oppressive fiscal policies and his enlistment of foreign mercenary recruits, plummeted after his crackdown on admired jurists and renunciants. Revolts soon broke out in 190/806 then in 202/818 in Rabaḍ Shanquda, a southern outskirt of Cordoba along the left bank of Guadalquivir, during which the jurist Yahyā b. Muḍar (d. 189/804) and others were killed.⁴

The revolt of Rabaḍ and the failed coup d'état were wake-up calls for al-Ḥakam I and his successors. Gone were the days when the emir could rule without validation of the juridical class, some of whom were renunciants. The emir's policies quickly turned pro-Mālikī, for he supposedly repented and pardoned the acclaimed renunciant scholar 'Īsā b. Dīnār (d. 212/827).⁵ The emir also introduced the institution of the jurisconsults (*fuqahā' mushāwarūn*) into his court, so that thenceforth he would be seen surrounded by legal experts who commanded the loyalty and respect of the people and whose presence and palace consultations stood as proof of the legitimacy and righteousness of the state. The jurisconsults were judicial advisors who typically formed an advisory council (*shūra*) for a *qāḍī* or the emir. They were chosen by the emir often in consultation with the chief judge of Cordoba, and were consulted for legal opinions (*fatwās*) both individually and collectively by the emir and his judges.⁶ The assimilation of jurisconsults into the regime apparatus

³ Ibid., pp. 104–105. ⁴ Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I, pp. 160–173.

⁵ *El²*, “'Īsā b. Dīnār,” (H. Monès). ⁶ Monès, “The role of men of religion,” pp. 58–62.

certainly secured a place of privilege for Mālikism in Umayyad Spain.⁷ But the alliance of religious figures to the state is always a double-edged sword, and jurists would soon face resentment from the masses who held them accountable for the ups and downs of an unpopular court.

The association specifically of renunciants with a crime against the state signals the potential for counterpolitical resistance that men of piety heralded already in the third/ninth century.⁸ Their latent power is hinted at in biographical sources which sometimes refer to them as being men “whose prayers are answered” (*mujābū al-da‘wa*).⁹ Due to their intense piety, the renunciants were perceived as being closer to God and their prayers more likely to be answered than ordinary believers or even state-judges. They were sometimes called upon to conduct communal rain supplications (*ṣalāt al-istisqā’*) during droughts instead of the officially appointed prayer leaders (*ṣāhib al-ṣalāt*).¹⁰ The esteem with which renunciants were held generally, and their appeal particularly during times of hardship, would pose a soft challenge to both religious and political authorities for centuries to come.¹¹

Retreaters from the Political Sphere

As the entente between Mālikīs and the ruling elite grew stronger, voices of intellectual, social, and mystical opposition grew louder. By the al-Murābiṭūn period, Andalusī poets such as Abū Ja‘far b. al-Binnī decried the use of *fiqh* as a means to worldly ends in verse such as:

Hypocrites! . . . The doctrine of Mālik has made you masters of the world, and you have used the name of [the compiler of Mālikī law] Ibn al-Qāsim to gather all your riches.¹²

Ibn al-Binnī was one of many scholars who had genuine scruples about the state-jurist entente. Conscientious objectors looked askance at wealthy

⁷ For an overview and further references on the place of Mālikism in al-Andalus, see Fierro, “Proto-Mālikis.”

⁸ Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 31–33.

⁹ Ibn Abī al-Dunyā has a book which bears the title *Mujābū al-da‘wa* (Those Whose Prayers Are Answered).

¹⁰ See Marín, “Muslim religious practices,” p. 881. The prayers of the ascetics were also desired during times of hardship, civil upheaval, war, or famine. See El Hour, “The Andalusian qāḍī,” pp. 68–69, wherein Ibn Khaldūn mentions that rain supplications was an official function of the judges.

¹¹ Marín, “Zuhhād of al-Andalus,” pp. 114–116.

¹² Murrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, pp. 235–236. Cf. Messier, “Re-thinking the Almoravids,” p. 66.

legal experts who associated with the rulers and received state pensions. By distancing themselves from the state and its jurists for political and pietistic causes, they personified the biographical trope known in medieval sources as the “Retreaters” (*munqabiḍūn*), for they “withdrew from rulers” (*inqibāḍ ‘an al-sultān*) out of pious precaution with respect to worldly authority. Echoing an age-old moralistic ethos that harks back, somewhat ironically, to Imām Mālik himself, the retreaters considered the alliance with corrupt courts to be a worldly compromise.¹³ Accounts of scholars who refused to serve appointments such as “chief judge of the capital city” (*qāḍī al-jamā‘a*) date back to the third/ninth century. For instance, one of Ibn Masarra’s teachers, the renunciant Ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Khushanī (d. 286/899), turned down the assignment of judge in Jaén, which angered the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III.

Scholars who practiced *inqibāḍ* were usually in the minority. However, their scrupulousness, piety, and anti-establishment politics left a deep impression on common believers, and they often stood as a moral check for the state-jurists. Tellingly, many judges began to cash in on piety for public consumption. It became a convention for jurists to first refuse an appointment to avoid being perceived as a sellout to the regime. Mimicking the *munqabiḍūn*, the state-jurists only accepted appointments of judgeship after displaying pious reluctance to engage in politics.¹⁴ As we shall see in Chapter 3, Andalusī mystics and followers of Ibn Masarra during the formative period lived during a time when the religious discourse was defined by the Mālikī judges. They often embraced the Retreaters’ way of life as an expression of political-intellectual dissent.

The Late Emirate and Early Caliphate Period

Retreaters, renunciants, mystics, and those “whose prayers are answered” formed an eclectic, minority, and generally tacit oppositional force to mainstream Mālikism. While certain strands of esoteric discourse in al-Andalus may have been silently tolerated by Andalusī Umayyads as a counterbalance to Fāṭimī esoterists (*bāṭiniyya*),¹⁵ there is no doubt

¹³ Coulson, “Doctrine and practice in Islamic law.” For a discussion of *inqibāḍ* by an early Andalusī scholar, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm*, I, pp. 631–647.

¹⁴ Marín, “Inqibāḍ ‘an al-sultān,” pp. 131–32, 139.

¹⁵ Claims by esoterists to infallibility, supernatural knowledge, and Mahdism challenged the religiopolitical legitimacy of the Umayyads. For a discussion of knowledge politics in al-Andalus, see Fierro, “Plants, Mary the Copt,” pp. 125–144.

that renunciants began to witness a full institutional and literary efflorescence around the turn of the fourth/tenth century, especially under the relatively tolerant reigns of caliphs 'Abd al-Rahmān III and his son al-Ḥakam II.¹⁶ Very often, *zuhd* was cultivated and transmitted through family ties of kinship and marriages. A number of renunciant-scholars began to allocate sections of their houses and to erect independent mosques as centers of instruction for their followers. The Umayyad capital of Cordoba, which for obvious reasons is the best documented city of this early period, housed many privately organized gathering places for renunciants.¹⁷ Umm al-Ḥasan Bint Abī Liwā' al-Miknāsiyya was a woman *zāhida* in the outskirts of Cordoba at whose house pious women gathered to study law, ponder the lives of saints, and to remember God (*dhikr*).¹⁸ These small-scale alternative sites of learning and devotion purposefully kept the government at arm's length. They were independent from the state by virtue of being privately funded and non-endowed (*waqf*) properties. The renunciants were more at home in the private sector, for Mālikī law did not stipulate that such institutions be relinquished to the state upon the completion of their intended purpose.¹⁹

In addition to organizing themselves in private houses and mosques, renunciants of the middle and late Umayyad period (late third to fourth/ninth to tenth centuries), as textual and archeological evidence demonstrates, were more institutionally organized than previously assumed. They spent extensive periods secluding themselves in rustic rural hermitages (sing. *rābiṭalribāṭ*) along the southeast coastal regions of al-Andalus in Almeria, Guardamar (province of Alicante), San Carlos de la Rapita (Catalonia), possibly Granada, as well as in central al-Andalus in Talamanca (near Madrid).²⁰ Excavations have proven that these *ribāṭs* were not defensive maritime outposts as previously assumed but rather full-fledged rural convents that were architecturally designed around

¹⁶ Makkī (*Ensayo*, p. 160) attributes the flowering of *zuhd* to the tolerance of the caliphs 'Abd al-Rahmān III and his son al-Ḥakam II. Cf. Marín, "Zuhhād of al-Andalus," p. 104.

¹⁷ Such as those run by Aṣṣbagh b. Mālik al-Qurtubī (d. 299/912), Abū Wahb 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Abbāsī (d. 344/955), and Khaṭṭāb b. Maslama b. al-Butrī (d. 372/983). Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Ta'rikh 'ulamā' al-Andalus*, p. 79, nr. 250. See also Gharminī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 50–52.

¹⁸ Makkī, "al-Taṣawwuf al-Andalusī."

¹⁹ Powers, "The Maliki family endowment," pp. 396–398. For a detailed study on pious endowments in al-Andalus, see García Sanjuán, *Till God Inherits the Earth*; and Carballeira Debasa, *Legados pios*.

²⁰ Fierro, "Unidad religiosa," pp. 406–07. Also, Fierro, "La religión," p. 444: Ṭalamankī retreated to a *ribāṭ* in Ṭalamanka after his trials in Zaragoza.

religious activity and financially maintained by small-scale commerce. The members (*murābiṭūn*) of these hermitages were renunciant-preachers who undoubtedly played an important role in the Islamization of the Peninsula, which was achieved by the fifth/eleventh century.²¹ They mark the institutionalization of renunciation and the crystallization of its distinctive group identity and prove that the Sufi convents (sing. *zāwiya*) of later periods had precedents in al-Andalus and possibly the Maghrib.²²

Renunciants of this defining period also attracted circles of followers (*ikhwān, aṣṣāb*). Although the dynamics of the master-disciple relationship are hard to make out, the life of Ibn Abī Zamanīn (d. 399/1009) of Elvira is illustrative. According to one of his biographers, he was the head of an influential “Sufi order” (*ṭarīqa*), which probably consisted of a loosely connected collectivity of renunciants.²³ Ibn Abī Zamanīn studied Mālikī jurisprudence and Ḥadīth in Cordoba and had a great fondness for anecdotes of saints (*akhbār al-ṣāliḥīn*) and literature (*adab*), as well as a gift for admonitory preaching (*wa‘z*) and spiritual guidance (*irshād*). A community activist, he held public readings of texts on renunciation (*zuhd*) and told heart-softening anecdotes of saints (*raqā‘iq*) and reports of their evidentiary miracles (*karāmāt*). He also delivered public admonitory sermons (*wa‘z*) in mosques.²⁴ Unfortunately, most of his poetry and his works on *zuhd* such as “Sustaining the Heart through Piety and Heart-Warming Anecdotes” (*Ḥayāt al-qulūb fī al-zuhd wa-l-raqā‘iq*) are lost.²⁵

The Renunciant Tradition in Seville

Seville seems to have been a leading center for the development of Islamic piety. It witnessed a flowering renunciant tradition that spanned from the Caliphal period in the fourth/tenth century to the Christian recapture of the city from the al-Muwaḥḥidūn in 646/1248.²⁶ This city was an

²¹ Azuar, “El ribât en al-Andalus,” p. 28.

²² Scales, “The ribât,” pp. 65–75. For further references see Azuar’s bibliography in “El ribât,” pp. 36–38.

²³ See Urvoy’s chart of the *ṭarīqa*’s members in *Le monde des ulémas*, pp. 127–129.

²⁴ Marín, “Zuhhād of al-Andalus,” p. 123.

²⁵ The teachings of Ibn Abī Zamanīn were partially preserved in an anthology (*dūwān*) of his disciple, Abū Ishāq al-Ilbīrī (Cf. García Gómez, *Un alfaquí español*), which, interestingly bears some resemblance to the works of the Egyptian Sufi saint Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859). (Makki, *Ensayo sobre*, p. 162). See also Gharminī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 88–91.

²⁶ One of the mid-fourth-/tenth-century leaders of the school of Seville was Sayyid Abiḥi al-Murādī (d. 325/936) who held admonitory sessions (*wa‘z*) in Seville. Also important was the ascetic jurist Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Absī (d. 379/989) who traveled east at age

attractive destination for renunciants, especially after the breakdown of Umayyad central authority. Seville provided safety for waves of refugees, scholars, and renunciants from Ifrīqiyā after the devastating Hilālī invasions, as well as southbound migrants from the northern and northwestern Andalūsī territories that had recently fallen into Christian hands. Seville soon rivaled Cordoba in both economic and scholarly prominence.

19 for studies. He studied with the Meccan Ḥadīth scholar Abū Ja‘far al-‘Uqaylī (d. 322/934), al-Junayd’s disciple Abū Sa‘īd b. al-A‘rābī (d. 340/952), Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933), and others, then returned to al-Andalus 332/943. Al-‘Absī authored a lost book on renunciation entitled *al-Istibṣār* and is described by Ibn Bashkuwāl as one who shunned worldly power (*min abl al-inqibād*). In the fifth/eleventh century the Ḥadīth scholar Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm known as Ibn al-Ṣābūnī (d. 446/1054) authored books entitled *al-Khumūl wa-l-tawāḍu‘* and *Ikhtiyār al-jalīs wa-l-ṣāhib*. His contemporary ‘Abd Allāh b. Mu‘min al-Tujībī was a prolific poet who composed extensively on *zuhd*. Also of note was Qādī ‘Iyād’s (d. 544/1149) teacher Muḥammad b. Khamīs, who was a mystic of western al-Andalus who spent much time with saints of Seville and authored a work on asceticism entitled *al-Muntaqā min kalām abl al-tuqā*. ‘Iyād received his teaching license (*ijāza*) for *K. al-Ri‘āya* from Ibn Khamīs. (‘Iyād, *al-Ghunya*, pp. 91–92, nr. 28). Other fifth-/eleventh-century ascetics include Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Lawshānī (d. 413/1022), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Judhāmī (d. 418/1027), and the jurist and poet Abū al-Qāsim b. ‘Uṣfūr al-Ḥadramī (d. 426/1034). During the sixth/twelfth century in addition to Ibn Barraḡān, Ibn al-‘Arīf, and Ibn Qasī, the Sevillian Salām b. Salām al-Bāhili (d. 544/1149) was a celebrated ascetic who authored poetry and books on *zuhd* including the extant and published *Dhakhbā‘ir al-a-lāq fi ādāb al-nufūs wa-makārim al-akhlāq*, where al-Muḥāsibī’s influence is visible. Somewhat later, Ibn Barraḡān’s student ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī (d. 582/1186) earned a reputation for his *zuhd* poetry. Perhaps after having witnessed the grim demise of his teacher, he became a *munqabiḍ* and turned down the appointment of *qāḍī*. The ascetic tradition of Seville was carried into the seventh/thirteenth century through the disciples Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī’s pupil Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mujāhid (d. 573/1178). The latter was the son of a famous warrior (*mujāhid*) and specialized in *fiqh*, Qur’ān exegesis, Ḥadīth, and Arabic literature (*adab*). He fused mysticism with jurisprudence and was influenced by the works of Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Ibn al-‘Arīf. (Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas*, pp. 189–191). Students of his circle included Yūsuf al-Shabrabrī (d. 587/1191), Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Mufrij al-Anṣārī, Muḥammad b. al-Zajjāj, Abū al-Ḥakam b. Hajjāj, and Abū Bakr b. Lu‘ī. They had assimilated the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arīf, Ghazālī, Qushayrī, and possibly Ibn Barraḡān. (Urvoy, *Penser d’Al-Andalus*, pp. 169–170). The *munqabiḍ* and pious ascetic Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Qassūm al-Lakhmī (d. 639/1242) (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp. 83–87, nr. 7) is described by Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Murrākushī as having shunned the company of politicians. It is noteworthy that Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Tujībī (d. 596/1200) (Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, II, p. 77, nr. 211) and the popular mystically inclined Ibrāhīm b. Suwār (d. 616/1220) (Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, I, pp. 141–142, nr. 434) were persecuted by the al-Muwahḥidūn for apparent involvement in uprisings or simply because they were perceived as threats during the reign of Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr (d. 595/1199). (See Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, for an analysis of the relationship of the al-Muwahḥidūn with Sufis in Marrakesh). Others are known by name only: Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shantarīnī (d. 606/1209), Aḥmad b. Mundhir b. Jahūr al-Azdī (d. 618/1221) (*Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 138, nr. 45). For sources, cf. Kara’s introductory study in *Shi‘r Abī ‘Imrān al-Mirtili*.

Under the Banū ‘Abbād rulers, it was not only a scholarly hub but one of the most prosperous *ṭā’ifas* with a thriving agrarian economy that surpassed the maritime economies of the coastal cities. The strong presence of renunciants from the fourth-fifth/tenth-eleventh centuries suggests that this religious movement was triggered as a collective conscientious response to the perceived sociopolitical, economic, and religious decadence of the late Umayyad and *ṭā’ifa* periods.

The biographical compilations of Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 579/1183) and Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260) suggest that the central hub of renunciant activity in al-Andalus was Seville and its environs. Moreover, the Sevillian grammarian and Qur’ānic readings (*qirā’āt*) expert Ibn Khayr (d. 515/1179) compiled a catalogue (*fahras*) of his hometown teachers, which also confirms this trend. Reportedly, a certain renunciant called Abū Bakr b. Qassūm al-Lakhmī (d. 639/1242) of the al-Muwahhīdūn period compiled a complete hagiography of the *zubbān* of his city entitled “Splendors of the Virtuous in Interacting with the Compeller” (*Maḥāsīn al-abrār fī mu’āmalat al-Jabbār*) which unfortunately is lost.²⁷ This biographical compilation attests to the importance of Seville as a hub of renunciant activity and formed part of a relatively late development of hagiographical literary activity in al-Andalus.²⁸ A cemetery of renunciants (*maqbarat al-ṣulabā’*) on the northern edge of Seville near the Gate of Macarena preserves the remains of these holy men.²⁹

Although very little of the renunciant literature (*zubbān*) of these first two centuries has survived, medieval sources confirm that Seville’s renunciants were especially influenced by the works of the early Baghdad Sufis, in particular Muḥāsibī’s treatise on Sufi psychology and ethics entitled “The Observance of the Rights of God” (*K. al-Ri’āya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*).³⁰ This long-standing culture of renunciation created fertile soil for

²⁷ Hayāt Kara in Rabat is working on reconstructing this important lost text. This is probably a source from which Sha’rānī relates that Ibn Barrajān was accused of being imām of 130 villages.

²⁸ The late development of Andalusī al-Muwahhīdūn hagiographical literature has been studied by many scholars, including María Luisa Avila and Manuela Marín.

²⁹ See Kara, *Shi’r Abī ‘Imrān al-Mīrtīlī*, n. 4 for references on this cemetery.

³⁰ For an analysis of the transmission of works on asceticism in al-Andalus, see Vizcaíno, “Las obras de *zubbān* en al-Andalus,” pp. 417–438. Muḥāsibī’s *al-Ri’āya li-ḥuqūq Allāh* was introduced into the Peninsula at the latest in the fifth/eleventh century by the poet and theologian Aḥmad al-Ilbīrī (d. 429/1037), who receives a brief notice in Ibn Bashkuwāl’s *Ṣīla*, I, p. 83, nr. 91. For a preliminary overview of Muḥāsibī’s influence, see Massignon’s *Essay on the Origins*, pp. 161–171. Massignon does not mention Muḥāsibī’s influence in the Muslim West. The importance of Muḥāsibī, however, is evidenced by passages from the Sevillian philologist and Ḥadīth scholar Ibn Khayr’s (d. 575/1179) catalogue of works

the cultivation of mysticism in the sixth/twelfth century. It is noteworthy that Ibn Barraġān, a Sevillian, emerged out of this tradition but respectfully disapproved of its excessive renunciatory practices and lack of intellectual bent, as discussed in Chapter 3. Ibn Barraġān insisted on distinguishing his mysticophilosophical, *ibra*-centered approach from that of his hometown renunciants. His emphasis on the primacy of contemplation, study, and prayer over renunciation probably signaled the existence of two competing forms of spirituality already within Seville in the fifth/eleventh century.

II IBN MASARRA: THE FIRST ANDALUSĪ MU‘TABIR

The rise of Andalusī mysticism is connected as much to the tradition of renunciation as it is to transregional contacts between Andalusīs and the Eastern heartlands of Islam. The full extent of this interchange is still imperfectly mapped, but is evident in the ebb and flow of *hajj* pilgrims and itinerant seekers of knowledge. Many Andalusī students settled as long-term foreign resident-scholars in Mecca and Medina. These resident-scholars, known as “neighbors” (*mujāwirūn*) of the Ka‘ba and the great mosque in Medina, devoted extensive periods to obtaining religious and spiritual instruction from notable scholars and saints.³¹ As a consequence, Andalusīs were well acquainted with the teachings and the circles of Eastern Sufis already by the fourth-/tenth-century Umayyad period. Books in circulation included authors such as Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī, Muḥāsibī, Saqaṭī, Tustarī, Junayd, and his important student Abū Sa‘īd b. al-A‘rābī, which were undoubtedly studied by Sevillian renunciants.³²

This interchange between East and West is evident in the decisive works of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Masarra al-Jabalī, who was hailed by

and teachers entitled *Fahrasat mā rawāhu ‘an shuyūkhīhi min al-dawāwīn al-muṣannafa fī durūb al-‘ilm wa-anwā’ al-ma‘ārif*. See specifically, K. al-Zuhd, K. al-Ghība, K. al-Tanbīh, K. al-Ḥubb li-LLāh ta‘ālā wa-mārātīb ablihi, K. al-Tawabhum wa-l-ahwāl (*Fibrīst Ibn Khayr*, pp. 271–272). Ibn Khayr’s catalogue was published in Saragossa in 1894–5 by J. Ribera y Tarragó (2 vols., as vols. IX–X of the BAH) under the title *Index librorum de diversis scientiarum ordinibus quos a magistris didicit. EI²*, “Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī,” (C. Pellat). For an analysis of Ibn Khayr’s work, see Vizcaíno, *La Fahrasa de Ibn Jayr*.

³¹ EI², “Mudjāwir,” (W. Ende). See also Molina, “Lugares de destino.”

³² Abū Sa‘īd b. al-A‘rābī had sixty-seven students of Andalusī origin, some of whom became prominent ascetics who propagated his Sufi teachings in al-Andalus. See F. Sezgin, GAS, I, pp. 660–661, for his works. See Marín, “Zuhhād of al-Andalus,” pp. 127–128, for a discussion of eastern ascetics who influenced Andalusīs.

Ibn ‘Arabī as “one of the truly great men of the [mystical] path in knowledge, state, and revelation.”³³ He stands as the first major representative of the Andalusī Mu‘tabirūn tradition and one of the most important sources of inspiration for Ibn Barrajān and his peers. Ibn Masarra was born in Umayyad Cordoba in 269/883 to an accomplished Ḥadīth scholar (‘Abd Allāh b. Masarra) who spent extensive periods of study in the East. The father stayed in Baṣra for some time where he frequented theological Mu‘tazilī circles, which may have influenced the writings of his son. Two other important teachers of Ibn Masarra are worth noting. The first was the celebrated Andalusī Ḥadīth expert, legal scholar, and renunciant Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ (d. 286/899),³⁴ a forerunner of the Ḥadīth movement in al-Andalus (see below). Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, like later Andalusī mystics of the sixth/twelfth century, was drawn to the study of Ḥadīth as a repository of wisdom and spirituality.³⁵ Ibn Masarra’s affiliation with Ibn Waḍḍāḥ is also notable since the latter had profound interests in renunciation, which most likely brought him into contact with the teachings of early Sufis like Saqaṭī, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859), and Bishr al-Ḥāfi (d. 227/841). These doctrines in turn would have been transmitted to Ibn Masarra himself.³⁶ The last notable teacher of Ibn Masarra was Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Khushanī (d. 286/899), an Eastern-trained Ḥadīth expert who formed part of the quietist *munqabiḍūn* movement. He scrupulously declined the judgeship of Jaén assigned to him by caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. It is through their medium and his own extensive journeys abroad that Ibn Masarra presumably was exposed to the religious sciences, early Eastern Sufism, as well as medicine, philosophy, the science of the letters, and astrology.³⁷

The complex and elusive intellectual orientation of Ibn Masarra has long been a bone of contention among medieval and modern scholars alike.³⁸ Goldziher, for instance, painted him as a representative of “free

³³ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, p. 149; Addas translation.

³⁴ For his works, check Sezgin, *GAS*, I, pp. 472–473.

³⁵ Monès, “The role of men of religion,” pp. 66–67. For a discussion of the link between Ḥadīth and Sufism in al-Andalus, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 18–19.

³⁶ Ibn Waḍḍāḥ compiled a work on saints and ascetics of al-Andalus entitled *al-‘Ubbād wal-‘Awābid*, which is not extant.

³⁷ Addas, “Andalusī Mysticism,” II, pp. 913–914. See also Fierro, *La heterodoxia en Al-Andalus*, pp. 88–91; and Guardiola, *Biografías de andalusies*, 215–324 (280, n. 446; 278, n. 432).

³⁸ For an overview of Ibn Masarra’s intellectual leanings, teachings, and assessment in modern scholarship, see Stroumsa’s “Ibn Masarra and the beginnings of mystical thought in al-Andalus”; see also Stroumsa and Sviri, “The beginnings of mystical philosophy.”

thinking” Mu‘tazilism in Iberia,³⁹ based on biographical portrayals in the works Ibn al-Faraḍī, Ibn Ḥayyān, and Ibn Ḥazm.⁴⁰ He asserted that Ibn Masarra held Mu‘tazilī doctrines such as free will, denial of intercession, and the createdness of divine knowledge.⁴¹ Asín Palacios, for his part, claimed to have detected Mu‘tazilī and Ismā‘ilī esoteric (*bāṭinī*) influences, as well as “pseudo-Empedoclean” strands in his thought; that is, Neoplatonic writings misattributed by the Arab *falāsifa* to Empedocles and Pythagoras.⁴² This observation rested on a vague segment from the biographer Šā‘id al-Andalusī’s (d. 462/1070) *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*⁴³ and was reiterated by Dozy, who identified him as a propagator of Fāṭimī Bāṭinism.⁴⁴ Asín Palacios, while admitting to a lack of substantive textual evidence,⁴⁵ set out to prove that Ibn Masarra concealed his Pseudo-Empedoclean doctrine of the five-fold hierarchy of substances issuing from a spiritual *Materia Prima* (*habā’*) under the guise of Mu‘tazilism and Ismā‘ilī esoterism (*bāṭiniyya*) and that this teaching was taken up by subsequent Sufis, from Ismā‘il al-Ru‘aynī (d. ca. 432/1040), to Ibn Barrajjān, Ibn al-‘Arīf, Ibn Qasī, and Ibn ‘Arabī. Although Asín Palacios’ thesis had its weaknesses and lacked textual evidence, the basic claim that Ibn Masarra decisively influenced later authors has withstood the test of time. While the degree to which Ibn Masarra’s ideas influenced Ibn al-‘Arīf remains a matter of debate among scholars,⁴⁶ his abiding influence in al-Andalus is evidenced by Ibn Barrajjān’s ‘*ibra*-centered writings, which will be examined in Chapters 5–8.

Ibn Masarra defies clear-cut classification since the lines between mysticism and philosophy are blurred in his writings. He was neither a union-seeking mystic nor a Neoplatonizing philosopher. He straddled both worlds and would have neither fully self-identified with either camp. Instead of imposing external categories on Ibn Masarra, it is perhaps helpful to honor the self-understanding that he had of his own place

³⁹ Goldziher, *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumart*, pp. 6–69.

⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fī al-mīlāl*, V, pp. 65–66.

⁴¹ Tornero, “Nota sobre el pensamiento de Abenmasarra,” pp. 503–506. Kamāl Ja‘far compares various doctrines attributed to Ibn Masarra in “Min mu‘allafāt Ibn Masarra al-mafqūda.”

⁴² Asín Palacios, *Abenmasarra y su escuela*.

⁴³ Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, pp. 20–21 (French translation = *Categories des Nations*, pp. 58–60); Qiftī, *Ta‘rīkh al-ḥukamā’*, pp. 16–17; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a (d. 668/1270), *Uyūn al-anbā’*, pp. 32–33.

⁴⁴ Dozy, *Histoire*, II, pp. 127–128.

⁴⁵ Asín Palacios, “Abenmasarra y su escuela,” p. 113.

⁴⁶ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 19–23.

within the Islamic tradition. It is notable that the only constant in his writings is the concept of *i'tibār*. This word stems from the root 'B-R, which denotes a "crossing" into the unseen world. *'Ibra* is a hallmark of Ibn Masarra's thought that left a lasting impression on his followers throughout the centuries. If anything, Ibn Masarra would have identified as a *mu'tabir*, that is, a contemplative who practices *i'tibār*. He held the figure of the patriarch Abraham as the supreme model of the *Mu'tabir*, as did Ibn Barraġān, Ibn Qasī, and other Andalusī mystics and philosophers (see Chapter 2).⁴⁷

Ibn Masarra's two surviving treatises were recovered by the Egyptian scholar Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja'far in the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin in 1972.⁴⁸ These two works evince the thought of a concise, deliberate, and highly sophisticated thinker of Neoplatonic and perhaps Brethren bent.⁴⁹ The first, entitled "Treatise on *I'tibār*" (*R. al-i'tibār*), also known as "The Book of Insight" (*K. al-taḥṣira*), argues boldly that the contemplative process of *i'tibār* leads to the same truth as revelation (*wahy*).⁵⁰ The process *i'tibār* is a central intellectual and spiritual exercise of contemplating God's signs (*āyāt Allāh*) in creation in order to understand and ultimately apprehend their higher governing realities. *I'tibār* rests on the idea that the herebelow and the hereafter are parallel worlds with associative correspondences. Reading the book of nature and contemplating God's signs (*āya*) with the intellect (*'aql*) enables the contemplative to gradually ascend the ladder of knowledge of divine unity (*tawḥīd*). Ibn Masarra provides a concrete example of *i'tibār* in his treatise.⁵¹ He takes the vegetal kingdom as his starting point of ascension that leads to an

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the importance of Abraham in the writings of Ibn Masarra and other Andalusī mystic-philosophers, see Stroumsa, "The Father of Many Nations," pp. 29–39; and Fierro, "Plants, Mary the Copt," pp. 135–144.

⁴⁸ Ibn Masarra, *Min qaḍāyā al-fikr al-Islāmī* (especially relevant are: *K. al-Ḥurūf* pp. 311–44; and *K. al-i'tibār* pp. 346–60). Ibn Masarra's *K. Tawḥīd al-mūqinīn* has not been discovered.

⁴⁹ Callataÿ finds evidences of Brethren influences already in Ibn Masarra's writings, which may place the dating of composition and circulation of the *Rasā'il* in al-Andalus in the third/ninth instead of the fourth/tenth century as posited by Fierro in "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus." See Callataÿ, "Philosophy and Bāṭinism"; and *idem* "From Ibn Masarra to Ibn 'Arabī."

⁵⁰ For a recent critical edition, see Garrido Clemente, "Edición crítica de la *Risālat al-i'tibār*."

⁵¹ Like Ibn Barraġān, he finds reference for *i'tibār* in the oft-repeated Qur'ānic injunction to *reflect* (Q. 3:13; 12:111; 16:66; 23:21). It should be noted that depicting the concept of *i'tibār* as a ladder of cognitive ascent is also evoked by the *Ikhwān al-ṣafā*. See Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension." See also Callataÿ, "Philosophy and Bāṭinism."

apprehension of the divine Throne. He begins by asserting that plants, which depend on a higher governing force (*mudabbir*) for their nourishment, are comprised of four mutually opposed elements: hot, cold, dry, wet. The governing principle that dominates these four elements is the “spiritual soul” (*al-nafs al-rūḥāniyya*), which in Islamic cosmology corresponds to God’s Footstool (*kursī*). The spiritual soul is a contingent entity that is ruled by the Intellect (‘*aql*), symbolized in this case by divine the Throne (‘*arsh*). The Intellect, for its part, is in a state of servitude to God who is nondelimited.⁵² It is thus, according to Ibn Masarra, that one climbs the echelons of cosmic existence and gains a glimpse of the divine by reflecting on a plant.

As we shall see, Ibn Masarra’s *i‘tibār* prefigures and inspires Ibn Barrajan’s thought. However, the former places more emphasis on the ability of the human intellect to operate without revelatory guidance in its quest for the truth:⁵³

“The substance of prophecy proceeds from the direction of the Throne down to the earth, and coincides with reflection which ascends from the direction of the earth up to the Throne. Both [prophecy and reflection] are equal and without distinction.”⁵⁴

Although Ibn Masarra’s attempt at reconciling the Qur’ān with philosophy is undeniably Neoplatonic, it would be an error to conclude that he embraced philosophy wholeheartedly. In fact, he nominally opposed the *falāsifa*, whom he criticized as “ill-intended and mistaken.” Whereas the term *i‘tibār* was used by Abū Naṣr al-Farābī (d. 338/950), the Brethren of Purity, and Avicenna (d. 428/1037) to mean the inductive method that

⁵² Tornero, “A report on the publication,” pp. 134–135.

⁵³ Ibn Masarra’s *‘ibra* in this treatise begins with earthly phenomena and ascends intellectually to the divine throne. Ibn Barrajan’s *‘ibra* does so as well but also emphasizes heaven as a starting point for downward reflection into the earthly realm. Ibn Barrajan’s analogical correspondences between worldly and otherworldly phenomenon is both ascendant and descending. By discovering the parallelism between the two worlds, the contemplative can maneuver between the two by the crossover from the visible to the unseen.

⁵⁴ “*Fa-jā ‘a kbābar al-nubuwwat muḥtadī min jihat al-‘arsh nāzilān ilā al-arḍ fa-wāfaq al-‘iṭibār al-ṣā‘id min jihat al-arḍ ilā al-‘arsh sawā’ bi-sawā’ lā farq.*” Ibn Masarra, *Min qaḍāyā al-fikr al-Islāmī*, p. 359. Fierro sometimes takes polemical accusations leveled against Masarrism at face value: “their [Masarrarian] belief in the possibility of attaining prophecy, of having direct contact with God, could also lead them to dispense with the Prophet.” Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism,” p. 183. Studies by Garrido Clemente confirm that the polemical accusations leveled against Ibn Masarra should not be taken literally, and in particular his alleged claims to acquiring prophecy (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*). On this see Garrido Clemente, “Notas sobre la atribución”; “Consideraciones sobre la vida”; and “¿Era Ibn Masarra de Cordoba un filósofo?”

equips the philosopher with tools to demonstrate God's existence, Ibn Masarra's is a method of meditative ascension which differs from the purely cerebral process of discursive reasoning. Indeed, his conception of *i'tibār* foreruns Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 581/1185) autodidact, Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān, and is also Sufi-inspired since only the spiritually purified saints are endowed with this gift:

God said with reference to His friends (*awliyā'*) who are endowed with insight (*mustabshirīn*): and they meditate on the creation of the heaven and the earth [and proclaim] Lord, Thou hast not created all this in vain! "(Q. 2:191)." ⁵⁵

Thus, while Ibn Masarra's thought system is thoroughly indebted to Neoplatonic conceptions of the cosmos, he also identifies *i'tibār* with the friends of God who are endowed with inner insight (*baṣīra*). Ibn Masarra's mention of the Sufi term "insight" (*baṣīra*) as the exclusive possession of the spiritual elect rules out the possibility of him being a philosopher in the strict sense. ⁵⁶

Ibn Masarra's second extant treatise is entitled "The Book of the Letters' Properties, Realities, and Roots" (*K. Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf wa-ḥaqā'iqihā wa-uṣūlihā*). ⁵⁷ In treating the metaphysical meanings of the fourteen separate letters that mark the beginning of certain Qur'ānic sūras, Ibn Masarra sets out to demonstrate that the Qur'ān explicates and complements creation – a theme favored by sixth-/twelfth-century mystics. This treatise, which argues from top (revelation) to bottom (intellect), complements the ascendant process of meditation described in *R. al-I'tibār*. He draws his inspiration largely from a treatise on the letters ascribed to Tustarī, thus drawing from what he perceived as being the Sufi tradition. ⁵⁸ Alongside these Sufi references, however, Ibn Masarra

⁵⁵ Ibn Masarra, *Min qaḍāyā al-fikr al-islāmī* (K. al-I'tibār), p. 346.

⁵⁶ Addas, "Andalusī mysticism," pp. 916–917.

⁵⁷ For a recent critical edition, see Garrido Clemente, "Edición crítica del *K. Jawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*."

⁵⁸ Tustarī, *Risālat al-ḥurūf*. Tustarī's influence on Ibn Masarra was recognized by medieval scholars such as Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurtubī (d. 671/1273) who cites both their treatises together in his *al-Asnā fī sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, p. 83. While modern scholars such as Garrido Clemente posit Tustarī's influence on Ibn Masarra (see Garrido Clemente, "El 'Tratado de las letras (*Risālat al-ḥurūf*)'", Ebstein and Sviri dismiss the *Risālat al-ḥurūf* as falsely ascribed to Tustarī and argue for the existence of a parallel Tustarī tradition in al-Andalus inspired by Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī and Andalusī Neoplatonic sources. See Ebstein and Sviri, "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*." In line with the Ebstein and Sviri's theory, my own opinion is that Tustarī did not have a significant influence on Ibn Masarra nor Ibn Barrajān. Ibn Barrajān's general hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān differs from Tustarī's (see Chapter 6). Moreover, Tustarī's notions of Muḥammadan Reality

also alludes to the emanationist cosmology of the *falāsifa* in support of his interpretation of the letters.

Whatever the case may be, al-Andalus was not ready for Ibn Masarra's philosophizing mysticism. His teachings were refuted by Andalusī and Eastern scholars shortly after his death.⁵⁹ His first-generation followers who remained faithful to his teachings despite accusations of heresy are all described in biographical accounts as renunciants (*nāsik, wari', zāhid*). In 350/961, three decades after his death, Ibn Masarra's works were still the focal point of contention and were set ablaze at the behest of the jurists. His followers were forced to disavow their affiliation to the *Masarrīyya* publicly. The crackdown was backed by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III who may have had concerns about Ibn Masarra's political views on the qualifications of Muslim rulership (*imāma*).⁶⁰

III POLITICIZED EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATES

Polemics Over the “Acquisition of Prophecy” and “Miracles of Saints”

In the end, the burning of Ibn Masarra's works was a show of political and ideological machismo by jurists and Umayyad officials, and it did not put an end to the ideas of the Mu'tabirūn. The tradition continued to generate

(*ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya*) as a pillar of light (*'amūd al-nūr*) is entirely absent from Ibn Barraḡān's writings (see Chapter 5). When Ibn Barraḡān does cite Tustarī, it is never as an alleged source of teachings and most often as an anecdotal footnote with no significant bearing on his overall teachings. While such specific themes are absent, at the same time there are general thematic parallels that can be found in the writings of Ibn Barraḡān and Tustarī. For instance, recalling the preexistential state of the soul on the “Day of Am I Not Your Lord” (*yawm alast*) in the “past,” and attaining certitude of the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyāma*) in the “future,” are themes that are found in Tustarī and other Sufis that strongly resonate with Ibn Barraḡān. See Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 145–184 (Chapter 4: God and His Events: Day of Covenant and Day of Resurrection); and on remembrance and certitude in Tustarī, pp. 201–215; and *Īdāb* index.

⁵⁹ We know of at least three Cordoban scholars who wrote refutations against Ibn Masarra. These are Ahmad b. Khālid b. al-Jabbāb al-Qurṭubī (d. 322/934), Ibn Yabqā (d. 381/991) who authored *K. Fī al-radd 'alā Ibn Masarra*, and the grammarian al-Zubaydī. Somewhat later, Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037) penned *al-Radd 'alā al-bāṭiniyya* which partially survives. In the east Abū Sa'īd al-A'rābī (d. 341/952) and Aḥmad b. Sālim (d. 356/967) refuted Ibn Masarra probably during his own lifetime. See Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism,” p. 179.

⁶⁰ Addas doubts Ibn al-Faraḡī's claim that Ibn Masarra was accused of heresy (*zandaqa*) and was obliged to flee al-Andalus; cf. “Andalusī Mysticism,” p. 914. On the persecution of Ibn Masarra's followers, see also Cruz Hernández, “La persecución anti-masarrī”; Fierro, “Accusations of *zandaqa*”; and Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism,” pp. 181–182.

controversy as it carried on covertly and overtly into the fifth/eleventh century, reaching its pinnacle in the writings of Ibn Barraĵān in the sixth/twelfth century. Soon, many doctrines that were ascribed to Ibn Masarra were refuted or projected back into his corpus by opponents and followers alike. At root, Ibn Masarra's claims to accessing higher realms of knowledge through *i'tibār* and mystical insight (*baṣīra*) posed a foundational challenge to the interpretive authority of Mālikism. His works were implicated in a broader epistemological polemic that ensued across the Muslim West, manifesting primarily in two ways: (a) the accusation of "acquisition of prophecy" (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*); (b) the debate over the "miracles of saints" (*karāmāt al-awliyā*).

Ibn Masarra's self-styled successor Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī gathered a following in Pechina (near Almeria) from whom he collected religious tax (*zakāt*). According to Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), Ru'aynī professed Masarrī teachings that had far-reaching epistemological consequences. He was guilty of claiming an ability to "acquire prophecy" (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*). Although this polemical accusation should not be taken at face value, it clearly stems from Ibn Masarra's equation of *i'tibār* with revelation (*wahy*). After all, if the intellect can grasp revealed truth or at least prophetic knowledge on its own, then a true "intellectual" is on par with a prophet and religion itself is dispensable for the elect.⁶¹

Alongside Ru'aynī, the prominent post-Masarran mystic of the *tā'ifa* period, Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037) is one of the earliest figures who became imprecated in these debates. He was criticized already by Ibn Ḥazm⁶² and appears to have authored at least one treatise on renunciation, "The Guide to Knowing the Friend" (*K. al-Dalīl ilā ma'rifat al-khalīl*), which unfortunately has not reached us. In contrast to the majority of his contemporaries, Ṭalamankī did not dedicate himself to the mastery of casuistic legal literature. His interests lay elsewhere. He studied Qur'ānic variants (*qirā'āt*), theology (*uṣūl al-diyānāt*), and Sufi doctrines in Mecca at the feet of the Sufi and Ḥadīth transmitter 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. Jahḍam (d. 414/1023).⁶³

⁶¹ Ru'aynī was accused of another Masarrī heresy, namely proclaiming that God's Throne (*'arsh*) was an entity that governed the world, since God in Himself is too sublimely transcendent to have any contact with His creation (Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-mīl*, IV, p. 199). The idea that the Throne governs the world is hinted at in Ibn Masarra's writings. At the same time, Ibn Masarra professes that God is the highest Governor (*mudabbir*) of the universe (Torner, "A Report on the publication," p. 146).

⁶² Fierro, "El proceso."

⁶³ It is possible that Ṭalamankī links the early Sufism of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād (d. 187/802) to Ibn al-'Arīf. See Fierro, "La religión."

Ṭalamankī's wanderings around al-Andalus led him to Almeria and Murcia. One text suggests that he attracted disciples and was considered "the head of a community" (*awwal al-jamā'a*). In Saragossa in 403/1012, a group of jurists and notables (*nubahā'*) accused him of deviating from the Prophetic model (*khilāf al-sunna*)⁶⁴ and of holding Khārijī-like doctrines, including permitting the spilling of innocent blood. These charges were acquitted by Ibn Furtūn, the judge of Saragossa, in 425/1034. After his trial, he retreated back to Ṭalamanka where he led an isolated life in the *ribāt*.⁶⁵ The accusation of Khārijism may indicate Ṭalamankī's suspect views on political leadership (*imāma*), namely that only the righteousness of a ruler, not genealogical affiliation with the Umayyads, qualified him to rule. But in any event, Ṭalamankī's following was too small to pose a political threat to the emir.

More importantly, Ṭalamankī's trial hinged on broader epistemological debates that shook al-Andalus, and played a role in forging the identity of Andalusī mystics as a distinct camp. His intellectual interests in the esoteric sciences which were penetrating into al-Andalus, perturbed the jurists of Almeria and signaled the beginnings of an alternative mysticism that was gaining ground in the wake of Ibn Masarra. Ṭalamankī's mystical outlook was predicated on the principle of *i'tibār* and the spiritual authority of saints, and challenged the interpretive and epistemological authority of Mālikism. Instead of engaging the tightly delineated legal principles of Mālikism – namely the (1) the Qur'ān, (2) the Sunna, (3) the practice of the Companions, their Followers, and the jurists of Medina (*'amal abl al-madīna*), (4) "blocking of the means [which give way to sin]" (*sadd al-dharā'i'*), (5) judicial preference (*istihsān*), (6) public interests (*al-maṣlaḥa al-mursala*), (7) *ijtihād* as defined by established conceptions of logic, and (8) a scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) – Ṭalamankī offered his followers an alternative, experiential mystical worldview based on sainthood.⁶⁶

Ṭalamankī was not committed to the teachings of the Mu'tabirūn. He dismissed Ibn Masarra and Ismā'īlī esoterism on the grounds that they gave way to claims of "acquisition of prophesy." But like the Mu'tabirūn, he endorsed the notion that miracles of saints (*karāmāt al-awliyā'*) were

⁶⁴ Fierro, "The polemic about the karāmāt," p. 247. Ibn 'Arabi squarely places himself within the orthodox camp in his support of the doctrine that prophecy is only attainable by divine designation (*ikhṭisās*) not by effort (*iktisāb*). See Chittick's *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 171; Idem., *The Self-Disclosure of God*, pp. 348–349.

⁶⁵ Fierro, "La religión."

⁶⁶ For a discussion of similar tensions in the context of Marīnid Morocco, see Cornell, "Faḡīh versus faḡīr," p. 224.

at once theologically tenable and did not detract from the status of the Prophet. Ṭalamankī's defense of *karāmāt* had far-reaching theological consequences and was pronounced in the context of a broader polemic that had spilled over from the Tunisian capital Qayrawān.⁶⁷ The *karāmāt* polemic seems to have been triggered by the illustrious jurist Ibn Abī Zayd (d. 386/996), who categorically rejected the possibility of saints' miracles on the grounds that they detracted from prophethood. His position was endorsed by Andalusī jurists of the late Umayyad and *tā'ifa* periods who disapproved of the pious exaggerations of hagiographers but accepted *karāmāt* as theologically tenable.⁶⁸ The scholar of Qur'ānic variants (*qirā'āt*) Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. 'Awn Allāh (d. 608/1212) even penned a defense of *karāmāt* from its sharp-tongued opponents. Like the early 'Abbāsīd polemic over the createdness of the Qur'ān (*khalq al-qur'ān*), at stake here were a number of underlying theological debates. These include the boundary between God's chosen Messengers and saints;⁶⁹ whether a saint could attain a greater degree of excellence than the Prophet; the nature of Prophetic miracles (sing. *mu'jiza*); polemics against Ash'arīs who argued that the Prophet's miracles stood as proof for the veracity of his revelation; and the criterion for determining which Muslim possessed greater excellence (*faḍl*).⁷⁰

Was There an Uṣūl Controversy in al-Andalus?

Before turning to the works of Ghazālī, an analysis of the medieval Andalusī debates over the place and utility of the discipline of legal theory, or the “principles of jurisprudence” (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), within the framework of Mālikī jurisprudence is in order. For a number of modern scholars in Goldziher's wake have posited that the debates over legal theory formed part of the greater epistemological rivalries of al-Andalus. We are often told that the al-Murābiṭūn jurists' approach to jurisprudence (*fiqh*) prior to Ghazālī was based purely on the legal precedent of earlier Mālikīs. Rather than engaging with Shāfi'ī-inspired uṣūl – which aimed at a methodological standardization of jurisprudence by setting forth

⁶⁷ The debate raging over prophecy and sainthood in al-Andalus was addressed by al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ in the *Antidote (al-Shifā' bi-ta'rif ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā)*.

⁶⁸ Ibn Abī Zayd's anti-*karāmāt* position was endorsed by Muḥammad b. Mawḥab al-Tujībī (d. 406/1015) and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), and opposed by Aṣīlī (d. 392/1001) and others.

⁶⁹ Serrano Ruano, “Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī,” p. 155.

⁷⁰ Fierro, “La religión,” p. 424–425.

principles for the extraction of legal rulings based on the Qur'ān, authoritative Ḥadīth, binding consensus of scholars (*ijmā'*), and syllogistic analogy (*qiyās*)⁷¹ – they anchored their casuistic legal opinions (*fatwas*) in the time-honored corpus of juridical precedent of their own school. Ghazālī's contested works thus undermined the legal framework of the powerful Mālikī scholars who were exclusively preoccupied with casuistic legal rulings (*furū'*) and who lacked a theoretical, uṣūlī basis for their legal injunctions. In the wake of Goldziher, scholars of the field often reason that traditional Mālikī jurists rejected Shāfi'ī-inspired uṣūl as a discipline, thereby alienating uṣūl-oriented jurists and mystics of the period. Ghazālī's promotion of uṣūl supposedly added fuel to an already entrenched epistemological divide, leading to the infamous book-burning of his works in the courtyard of the mosque of Cordoba.

There is no doubt that most Andalusī mystics were trained in legal theory and the science of Ḥadīth, drawing upon both disciplines to buttress their teachings. The uṣūlī paradigm set up by Imām al-Shāfi'ī – who praised Sufis in his poetry – provided tools for engaging directly with the Ḥadīth corpus, and, in its express and systematic focus on the practices of the Sunna and the Pious Predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), facilitated the validation of the mystical life.⁷² Mystics who advocated uṣūl such as the fifth-/eleventh-century Ṭalamankī,⁷³ Aḥmad al-Ilbīrī “al-Uṣūlī” (d. 429/1037), as well as Ibn al-'Arīf and Ibn Barraḡān saw in its integration into Mālikism a vehicle for reforming post-Umayyad society by opening religious dogmatics in the Peninsula to a more universal, Sunni internationalist, interethnic discourse.⁷⁴ However, the thesis that Ghazālī's promotion of uṣūl posed a threat to Mālikī legal particularists (*ahl al-furū'*), who in turn set the *Iḥyā'* ablaze, does not stand up to scrutiny. Quite simply, Ghazālī's influential uṣūlī work, “The Essentials of Legal Theory” (*al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*), never became a source of controversy in the Muslim West because the epistemological debates over uṣūl were largely put to rest by the fifth-/eleventh-century *tā'ifa* period

⁷¹ See Kamali's *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*.

⁷² Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 16.

⁷³ Urvoy claims that the trial of Ṭalamankī was spearheaded by fifteen jurists of Saragossa who were troubled by his introduction of uṣūl methods into al-Andalus through his work *al-Wuṣūl ilā ma'rifat al-uṣūl*. The judge of the city proclaimed him innocent. Cf. Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas*, p. 131.

⁷⁴ See Cornell's diagram layout of Uṣūlī-Sufi relations of the period in *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 18–19. The connection between mysticism and *uṣūl al-fiqh* has been examined by D. Urvoy and D. Serrano Ruano.

through the efforts of a number of Ḥadīth scholars, legal theorists, and mystics. By Ghazālī's time, *uṣūl* was mostly accepted by the Andalusī intelligentsia, although it did not form a state official doctrine nor a sweeping scholarly consensus.⁷⁵ The writings of Shāfi'ī himself, including his seminal *uṣūl* treatise *al-Risāla* and his creedal text *K. al-Fiqh al-kabīr*, were imported into al-Andalus already by the Ḥadīth expert Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889).⁷⁶ By the fourth/tenth century, the pioneering theologian and Ḥadīth expert 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Aṣlī (d. 392/1001) authored the *Book of Demonstrations* (*K. al-Dalā'il*). This work is a classic *uṣūlī* discussion of the scholarly disagreements and variances (*ikhhtilāf*) between Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, and Shāfi'ī. During the fifth-/eleventh-century *tā'ifa* period, a number of accomplished Andalusī Ḥadīth-*Uṣūl* scholars were trained in the East,⁷⁷ including Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071).⁷⁸ Finally, the staunch sixth-/twelfth-century detractor of Ghazālī's works, Ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 508/1114), was himself called a legal theorist, and the anti-Ghazālian campaigners in the Muslim West were most often steeped in *uṣūl*.⁷⁹

The introduction and absorption of *uṣūl* into the rubric of Mālikism was intensified by the influx of the immense body of Sunnī Ḥadīth literature. The new compilations of Prophetic reports were gradually, and sometimes reluctantly, accommodated into the *Muwatta'a*-centered orbit

⁷⁵ Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas*, p. 188. ⁷⁶ Fierro, "The introduction of Ḥadīth," p. 78.

⁷⁷ E.g., the Qayrawānī Muḥammad b. Sa'dūn (d. 485/1092), 'Abd Allāh al-Bushkulārī (d. 461/1068), and Aḥmad b. al-Dilā'ī (d. 478/1086) actively promoted *uṣūl*. See Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 15–16.

⁷⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr penned works such as his "Taking into Account the Legal Schools of the Scholars of the Garrison Cities" (*K. al-Istidhkar li-madhāhib 'ulamā' al-amṣār*) on disputations (*khilāf*) of jurists belonging to difference schools of law. In addition, he wrote a book entitled "The Sufficient Book on Jurisprudence and on the Conflicting Opinions of Mālik and His Followers" (*K. al-Kāfi fi al-fiqh wa-l-ikhhtilāf fi aqwāl Mālik wa-aṣḥābihi*) on intra-*madhhab* disputations in which his mastery of *uṣūl* shines forth. It is noteworthy that he never set foot off the Peninsula and that his mastery of the new science rested entirely on locally available fifth-/eleventh-century sources. Bājī, for his part, spent extensive time studying religious sciences including *uṣūl* with eastern scholars and authored his seminal work entitled "The Clear-Cut Discussion on the Principles of Legal Theory" (*Iḥkām al-ḥuṣūl fi aḥkām al-uṣūl*). Bājī also penned a "Treatise on *Uṣūlī* Terminology" (*Al-Risāla fi al-ḥudūd*), and following the footsteps of his pioneering teacher Abū Ishāq al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083), introduced the new subdiscipline of argumentation (*jadāl/munāẓara*) and its principles in al-Andalus. Bājī's concern with terminological precision and the principles of argumentation grew out of the necessity to defend rationally and coherently the foundations of his legal school and to demonstrate the falsity of adversaries. See Fierro, "Unidad religiosa," pp. 410–412. See Bājī's debates with Ibn Ḥazm over *uṣūl* in Turki, *Polémiques*.

⁷⁹ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, III, p. 831, nr. 1262.

of Andalusī scholarship in the fourth/tenth to fifth/eleventh century. The rise in Ḥadīth and uṣūl studies never demoted the status of *fiqh* to that of a secondary religious science. Like uṣūl, Ḥadīth revitalized Mālikism, stimulated an earnest interest in the study of Prophetic reports, and paved the way for the endorsement of Sufism by religious scholars.⁸⁰ Dozens of Ḥadīth collections were available to the sixth-/twelfth-century mystics, informing their works and inspiring new patterns of thought. Notably, Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn al-ʿArīf were hugely influenced by Ḥadīth and uṣūl. They eagerly studied and adopted these new works into their thought system, finding therein inspiration and scriptural support for cosmological doctrines. In fact, Ibn Barraĵān devoted his first work, *al-Irshād*, to proving the uṣūlī principle that the Qurʾān confirms and complements Ḥadīth. He penned the *Irshād* with an aim to securing a place for Ḥadīth, both strong and weak, in the broader body of Andalusī religious discourse (see Chapter 4), and his teachings are deeply inspired by Ḥadīth.

An important forerunner who laid the foundation for Andalusī Ḥadīth studies was Baqī b. Makhḷad (d. 276/889), acclaimed by his biographers as the “master of his age” (*shaykh ʿaṣrib*). Unfortunately, most of his works are lost.⁸¹ He is reported to have spent thirty-four years in the East studying at the feet of 284 masters and returning to his homeland as a full-fledged “practitioner of independent legal reasoning” (*mujtahid*). Interestingly, Ibn Makhḷad never completely broke away from the school of Mālik, which was an indispensable ingredient for regional unity in al-Andalus. Ibn Makhḷad’s remarkable scholarly accomplishments opened the floodgates for Ḥadīth studies, and over the next 200 years most of the Ḥadīth collections were absorbed into the orbit of Andalusī scholarship.⁸²

⁸⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, Ibn Barraĵān drew from a variety of Ḥadīth sources to buttress his mystical and cosmological doctrines.

⁸¹ See Sezgin, *GAS*, I, pp. 151–152.

⁸² The first Ḥadīth collections to reach the Peninsula in the second half of the third/ninth century were the *Muṣannafs* of Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī (d. 196/811), Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), and Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 199/815), followed a few decades later by those of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/826), Ḥammād b. Salama (d. 167/783), and Saʿīd b. Maṣūūr. By the fourth/tenth century, the *Sunan* of al-Nasāʿī (d. 303/915), which was especially cherished by Andalusīs, as well as that of Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888), were in circulation as well. In the second half of the fourth/tenth century, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* of Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875), the *Sunan* of Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), and the *Musnads* of Ibn Abī Shayba and Asad b. Mūsā al-Umawī (d. 212/827) were accessible to Andalusīs, as was Ibn Ḥanbal’s (d. 241/855) monumental *Musnad* by the end of the same century. In the fifth/eleventh century, collections of single-strand aḥādīth reports (*gharib al-ḥadīth*) such as that of the collection of Ibn

Taking their cue from Ibn Makhlad, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and Bājī, who were both acclaimed by *ṭā’ifa* scholars as “renewers” (sing. *mujaddid*) of Mālikism and by modern historians as heralders of Mālikism’s “second phase,” are credited with galvanizing Ḥadīth study and breathing new life into Andalusī Mālikism.⁸³ Although neither Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr nor Bājī were direct teachers of the mystics of the formative period, the latter was indebted to their teachings and almost certainly received training at the hands of their disciples. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr deplored *taqlīd* and, like Ibn Barraġān, staunchly advocated a fresh return to the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. He authenticated the Ḥadīth reports and chains of transmission of the *Muwatṭa’* in a work entitled “Introducing the Meanings and Chains of Transmission of the *Muwatṭa’*” (*al-Tambhīd limā fī al-Muwatṭa’ min al-ma’ānī wa-l-asānīd*).⁸⁴ Bājī, on the other hand, who had acquired extensive training in Ḥadīth, legal theory (*uṣūl*), and theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) with Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. ca. 434/1042) in Mecca, authored a short and popular commentary on the *Muwatṭa’* entitled *al-Muntaqā*, which played an important role in legal discussions among scholars of the *ṭā’ifa* period.

The Al-Murābiṭūn State-Jurist Entente

The nature of the state-jurist entente, especially during the al-Murābiṭūn period, is worth a close examination. For it is unlikely that the epistemological rivalries that broke surface across al-Andalus and the Maghrib would have culminated in full-scale book-burnings, trials, incarcerations, and even occasional executions had it not been for the immense political power vested in the hands of Mālikī state-jurists. Challenging the latter’s epistemological foundations amounted to a political affront to an entrenched legal school (*madhhab*) that had reigned supreme since early Umayyad days. The success of Andalusī Mālikism over other legal methodologies and sectarian movements owed as much to individual efforts of scholars, including Mālik’s own third-/ninth-century disciples, as it did to the support that Mālikīs received from governments seeking to maintain

Qutayba (d. 276/889) and Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 223/837) were introduced. See Fierro, “The introduction of Ḥadīth,” pp. 87–90.

⁸³ Urvoy, *Penser d’Al-Andalus*, p. 82; Guichard and Soravia, *Les royaumes de Taïfas*, pp. 222–226. Fierro distinguishes between two phases of Mālikism in al-Andalus. In the third-/ninth-century jurists were followers of the first mid-second-/eighth-century systematization and synthesis of *fiqh* by Mālik b. Anas; the second phase is the fifth-/eleventh-century revival discussed here. See Fierro, “Proto-Mālikīs.”

⁸⁴ See *El*², “Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr,” (C. Pellat).

control and unity over a highly divisive territory. However, it would be a mistake to equate the Mālikī judges' staunch opposition to mysticism as a reflection of a pharisaical, inflexible, dry, intolerant, and monolithic legal system as a whole. The abiding cliché about the “blind and mechanical”⁸⁵ methods of legal particularists (*ahl al-furū`*), especially of the al-Murābiṭūn period, pervades secondary literature on al-Andalus and calls for cautious nuance.

It is true that for historical reasons, state-sponsored jurists of al-Andalus were (1) historically fortunate in that they were methodologically unchallenged by rival Ḥanafī “‘Irāqīs” or Fāṭimī Ismā‘īlīs as were the jurists of Qayrawān and were (2) collectively interested in upholding an epistemology that was exclusively defined by themselves. But even so, dry and brittle systems tend to break, whereas Andalusī Mālikism thrived. Political sponsorship alone does not explain the triumph of Mālikism. Excepting rites of worship (*‘ibādāt*) and laws of apostasy (*zandaqa*), Mālikism was in many respects more flexible and laissez-faire than Ḥanafism especially with regard to social and interpersonal behavior (*mu‘āmalāt*), as pointed out by Schacht and Chehata.⁸⁶ In the broadest terms, the resilience of the Mālikī school owed to its ability to graft and assimilate new methodologies and layers of knowledge onto itself. Complimentary bodies of religious discourse, such as new Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, legal theory, Ash‘arī theology, and Sufism, were progressively internalized by the guardians of normative Islam in al-Andalus and accommodated into the citadel of orthodoxy. Mālikism, in other words, reigned supreme for centuries, not on account of its hardened husk, but on account of the pragmatism of the ‘ulamā’ and their ability to adapt to their times.⁸⁷

That said, the Mālikī judges in general, and under the al-Murābiṭūn in particular, wielded unprecedented political authority in urban areas. The ruling emirs embraced this legal school and vested it with power. State judges (sing. *qāḍī*) spoke for al-Andalus as a whole and conferred the regime with judicial legitimacy. In turn, judges benefitted from the post-*tā’ifa* recentralization of the Muslim state and had a vested interest in maintaining their new status quo under the al-Murābiṭūn. Their office

⁸⁵ One of the most evident cases is in the almost polemical chapter by Urvoy, “The ‘ulamā’ of al-Andalus,” pp. 852–853.

⁸⁶ Idris, “Reflections on Mālikism,” pp. 87, 101.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the evolution and intellectual creativity of Mālikism, see M. Fierro, “Proto-Malikis.”

slowly evolved and became ever more institutionalized.⁸⁸ By the reign of Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (r. 453–500/1061–1107) who conquered al-Andalus, judgeship as an institution had already taken on a life of its own, and distinctive terms were coined to designate the assignment of a *qāḍī*.⁸⁹ Cohesively integrated into the regime, the custodians of normative Sunnī Islam stood at once as representatives of political authority and jurisdiction (*qaḍāʾ*) and as interlocutors between ruler and subject in the major towns and cities. On the one hand, the masses (*ʿamma*) looked to them to represent their interests; on the other, judges were loyal to the ruling regime and received generous pensions from the state treasury.⁹⁰ Fascinating accounts of Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn’s consultations with the jurists bear testimony to this mutually beneficial partnership. His son ʿAlī b. Yūsuf presumably made *every* decision, however minor, after legal consultation with a jurist.⁹¹ Aside from the presumed piety of the al-Murābiṭūn rulers, such reports also allude to both the authority of the jurists in guiding the emir as well as dynasty’s claims to political legitimacy by making their consultations with the guardians of the faith known publically.⁹²

The nature of the appointment of these mighty judges throws light on the power dynamics between the al-Murābiṭūn court in Marrakesh and structures of authority in al-Andalus. Generally speaking, the judges were elected by religious scholars and local governors on the basis of expertise in the Islamic legal sciences or by negotiation between prominent families and the al-Murābiṭūn authorities in Cordoba or Marrakesh. Often, social and scholarly prominence went hand in hand. However, some were hereditarily assigned the post of *qāḍī* and were known to lack adequate training in law. Those with shaky academic credentials deferred to their advisory council (*shūrā*) of lower-ranking jurisconsults (*fuqahāʾ mushāwarūn*) who could override the *qāḍī*’s pronouncements.⁹³

Ibn Barraḡān and his peers lived during the heyday of the al-Murābiṭūn judges. Ibn Barraḡān was ultimately arrested, put on trial, and imprisoned by state-sponsored jurists on grounds of unwarranted religious innovation (*bidʿa*). The chief judge of Seville, under whose authority Ibn Barraḡān found himself, was known to wield power over judicial, political, and even military matters. Much like Sevilan chief judges, those in Cordoba,

⁸⁸ Lagardère, “La haute judicature,” p. 137. ⁸⁹ El Hour, “The Andalusian qāḍī,” p. 78.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 67–83. ⁹¹ Messier, “Re-thinking the Almoravids,” p. 10.

⁹² Garden, “Al-Ghazālī’s contested revival,” pp. 148–149.

⁹³ Monès, “The role of men of religion,” pp. 58–62.

Valencia, Almeria, Granada, and Murcia wielded great religious and political authority. According to the historian Ibn Khaldūn, the judges of this period were responsible for the weak, insane, orphaned, impoverished, and disabled. They administered endowments, final wills, the establishment of marital bonds for women who had no guardians, the roads, construction projects such as mosque extensions, as well as scrutinized witnesses, lead Friday prayers and supplications for rain, and appointments of secretaries.⁹⁴ They were overseers of the treasury and ensured the honest practices of tax assessors and collectors.

In many instances judges exerted such power over the governor that it was unclear who was actually in charge. For example, the politically tactful jurist Abū al-Walīd al-Qurṭubī “al-Jadd” (d. 520/1126), the grandfather of Averroes, served as Chief Judge of Cordoba between 511/1117 and 515/1121. Ibn Rushd al-Jadd reports having journeyed to Marrakesh to inform ‘Alī b. Yūsuf of the attacks of Alfonso I, the king of Aragon (El Batallador), and of the collaboration of the Arabised Christians (Mozarabs) in these attacks. He issued a legal decree (*fatwā*) to deport the Cordoban Mozarabes to North Africa and instigated the removal of the governors of Granada and Cordoba from office. He also issued *fatwās* for the construction of defensive city walls in order to defend the capital from Christian attacks.⁹⁵ While such judges in major cities made pronouncements in all spheres, small town (*kūra*) judges were typically restricted to juridical affairs since central government had little influence in rural areas.⁹⁶ It was perhaps in order to avoid confrontation with the powerful judges that renunciants and mystics, including Ibn Barrajān, often moved to villages in the rural areas of al-Andalus.

The mid-sixth-/twelfth-century militarization of the northern frontier and the precariousness of the dynasty’s hold on power strengthened the authority of the Andalusī *fuqabā’*. The weakening al-Murābiṭūn regime tried to save face by preserving a façade of power and authority over the legislative process and appointment of judges.⁹⁷ As the regime declined, some judges began to rebel against central authority, just as they had done under the *tā’ifas*. In cities where the al-Murābiṭūn had little control, judges forcefully took office or were ushered in by popular appeal.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ El Hour, “The Andalusian qāḍī,” pp. 68–69. ⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

⁹⁶ *El*², “Kāḍī,” (E. Tyan). ⁹⁷ Urvoy, “The ‘ulamā’ of al-Andalus,” p. 867.

⁹⁸ The rise of the *qāḍī* to political leadership was more frequent in al-Andalus than in other regions of the Muslim West, but this change of seats did occur elsewhere. In North Africa, ‘Iyād b. Mūsā al-Yahṣūbī (d. 544/1149), author of the celebrated “Antidote to Making Known the Rights of the Chosen One” (*K. al-Shifā fī al-ta’rif bi-ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*),

“The judges,” proclaimed the biographer Ibn al-Abbār, “rose to power in al-Andalus from east to west” (*ta’ammarat fīhi al-quḍāt fī bilādihā sharqan wa-gharban*).⁹⁹ Some, like the popular Abū Ja’far b. Ḥamdīn (d. 548/1153) in Cordoba reigned briefly in 539/1145 and adopted the al-Murābiṭūn emir’s honorific title of “Commander of the Muslims” (*amīr al-muslimīn*).¹⁰⁰ The *qāḍī*-rulers minted coins in their names and, like the *tā’ifas* of old, often assumed quasi-caliphal honorifics such as “Commander of the Faithful” (*amīr al-mu’minīn*) in an attempt to gain support and legitimacy for their imāmates.

The *Ihyā’* Controversy

Ghazālī made no effort to ingratiate himself with sellout jurists of any stripe. “A fly on a pile of excrement,” he once grumbled, “is better than a Qur’ān reciter at the door of . . . [rulers].”¹⁰¹ It is not surprising that his writings were so quickly drawn into the center of polarized and politicized Andalusī scholarship. Embracing Ghazālī or rejecting him was synonymous with accepting or rejecting the paradigm of the al-Murābiṭūn jurists. His books were set ablaze twice: first in 503/1109,¹⁰² then in 538/1143. The earliest account of the auto-da-fé is reported by the logician Yūsuf b. Ṭumlūs (d. 620/1223) in his “Primer on Logic” (*al-Madkhal li-ṣinā’at al-mantiq*). He states that a group of jurists urged Prince ‘Alī b. Yūsuf to burn Ghazālī’s books on the grounds that they may lead Muslims astray;¹⁰³ in other words, that his works would lend legitimacy to radical, sharī‘a-trumping esoterist (*bāṭinī*) Sufi doctrines.¹⁰⁴ The book-burning took place approximately eight years after the *Ihyā’* was introduced to al-Andalus.¹⁰⁵ Its chief promulgator was Cordoba’s hard-line *qāḍī* Ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 508/1114),¹⁰⁶ who held that reading the *Ihyā’*

assumed rulership of Sabta after the fall of the al-Murābiṭūn in that city. In Ifrīqiya, the Banū ‘Ammār defied Fāṭimī and Seljuk rule, governing Tyre and Tripoli in Siria prior to the conquest of the Crusaders in 502/1109. *El²*, “‘Ammār,” (G. Wiet); Cf. Fierro, “The *qāḍī* as ruler,” pp. 103–104.

⁹⁹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, pp. 227–228, nr. 755.

¹⁰⁰ Not to be confused with the anti-Ghazālīan Ibn Ḥamdīn who died in 508/1114.

¹⁰¹ John Williams (ed. & trans.), *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, pp. 138–140.

¹⁰² Some sources date the event between 499/1106 and 509/1116.

¹⁰³ Ibn Ṭumlūs, *K. al-Madkhal*, pp. 11–12.

¹⁰⁴ Serrano Ruano, “Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī,” p. 155.

¹⁰⁵ Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī brought the *Ihyā’* with him from the Mashriq in 495/1102. See Mannūnī’s, “*Ihyā’* ‘ulūm al-dīn,” pp. 126–127.

¹⁰⁶ According to the seventh-/thirteenth-century al-Muwahhīdūn historian ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Murrākushī, Ghazālī’s auto-da-fé was ordered by emir ‘Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufin in

amounted to infidelity.¹⁰⁷ He hailed from a prominent and well-connected scholarly family, the Banū Ḥamdīn, with long-standing ties to the al-Murābiṭūn.¹⁰⁸

Other illustrious names around the region were associated with this first anti-Ghazālīan campaign, including Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126) in Alexandria,¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141) of Sicily, ‘Umar al-Bakrī of Tunisia, Muḥammad b. al-Ilbīrī of Granada (d. 537/1142),¹¹⁰ and initially Ibn Ḥirzihim (d. 559/1165) in Fez. All of the above persons authored refutations of the *Iḥyā’*. For instance, Ṭurṭūshī marshalled a list of criticisms against Ghazālī. He censured the latter for not being explicit about the indispensability of theology for the attainment of sound faith, for employing weak aḥādīth and dubious reports about prophets’ and saints’ miracles, and for bearing the mark of the teachings of the radical union-seeking mystic Ḥallāj, the far-fetched speculations of the Aristotelianized *falāsifa*, and the Neoplatonic teachings of the Brethren.¹¹¹

At root, the book-burning was a political and ideological statement and a rejection of Sufism as a distinct discipline. In contrast to the complex critique of the *Iḥyā’* in Nīshāpūr in works like “Listing the Problems of the *Iḥyā’*” (*al-Imlā’ fī ishkalāt al-Iḥyā’*), which objected to Ghazālī’s epistemological hierarchy and the relegation of jurisprudence and theology, Ibn Ḥamdīn’s Andalusī critique was probably based on second-hand accounts or a surface perusal of the *Iḥyā’*.¹¹² As with the anti-Masarran crack-down, the scholarly refutations and book-burnings failed to put an end to Ghazālī’s influence. The *Iḥyā’* was never reduced to fringe status, and

503/1109 who threatened all owners of Ghazālī’s books with the death penalty and confiscation of property. This report does not contradict jurists’ involvement in the ban since the emir could not have made this prohibition without a core backing. Murrākushī, *al-Muḥib*, p. 123; = *Histoire des Almohades*, trans. E. Fagnan (Alger 1893), pp. 148–149.

¹⁰⁷ “Re-thinking the Almoravids,” p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ Members of his family had served as *judges* in Granada and Cordoba and were instrumental in assisting the al-Murābiṭūn ruler ‘Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn against the Cordoban rebellion of Muḥammad al-Lamṭūnī in 500/1106. Fierro, “The qāḍī as ruler,” pp. 89–92.

¹⁰⁹ See Sa’d Ghurāb’s “Ḥawla ihrāq al-murābiṭīn li-*iḥyā’*,” pp. 158–163.

¹¹⁰ Ilbīrī compiled the main refutation of Ghazālī’s works in *al-Nukat wa-l-amālī fī-l-naqd ‘alā al-Ghazālī*; available at the Escorial (Derenbourt and Lévi-Provençal, nr. 1483) (cf. Urvoy, *Penser d’Al-Andalus*, p. 170).

¹¹¹ Ṭurṭūshī’s criticism of Ghazālī can be found in his two works, *R. ilā ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Muẓaffar* and *K. al-asrār wa-l-‘ibar*. For the *Risāla*, cf. Ghurāb, “Ḥawla ihrāq al-murābiṭīn li-*iḥyā’*,” pp. 139–141, and 158–163; and Ṭurṭūshī, *K. al-Ḥawādīth wa-l-bida’*, pp. 61–64, nr. 19; Mannūnī, “*Iḥyā’* ‘ulūm al-dīn,” pp. 125–137.

¹¹² Garden, “al-Ghazālī’s contested revival,” pp. 174–175.

copies remained in circulation despite the ban of 503/1109. In fact, this first ban stimulated more earnest study of the *Ihyā'* than before, as evidenced by the next three decades of increasingly sophisticated discussions of this work.¹¹³

The crackdown also had its vociferous opponents. Several prominent and card-carrying *Ghazāliyyūn* spoke out against the ban on both sides of the Straits.¹¹⁴ In al-Andalus, Almeria's expert Qur'ān reciter (*muqri'*) Abū al-Ḥasan al-Barjī (d. 509/1115) jeopardized his post in the *shūrā* council by issuing a counter-*fatwā* to Ibn Ḥamdīn, denouncing jurists who had ordered the burning of the *Ihyā'*. The latter was a teacher of the mystic Ibn al-'Arīf and a jurisconsult in the *shūrā* of the Ghazālian *qāḍī* of Almeria Marwān b. 'Abd al-Malik. His *fatwā* received public backing by two fellow jurisconsults, 'Umar b. al-Faṣīḥ and the distinguished jurist Ibn Ward al-Andalusī (d. 540/1146).¹¹⁵ Moreover, it is known that a number of Ghazāli's direct students settled in Almeria. The Sufi scholar of Qur'ānic variants (*muqri'*) Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Balawī (d. 545/1150) obtained permission from Ghazāli to transmit his works. After his return from the East, he was assigned the important position of prayer leader and preacher at the great mosque of Almeria.¹¹⁶ Another Almerian, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Khawḷānī, alias al-Balaghī (d. 515/1121), studied at the feet of Ghazāli as well.¹¹⁷ Finally, some scholars such as Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī and Ibn Rushd al-Jadd simultaneously affirmed and challenged Ghazāli both before and after the book-burning.

The second auto-da-fé of 538/1143 took place only two years after Ibn Barrajan's death and was instigated by the beleaguered al-Murābiṭūn emir Tāshufīn b. 'Alī.¹¹⁸ It received the support of several scholars of al-Andalus and the Maghrib including Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī.¹¹⁹ Beyond scholarly concerns, it is clear that many al-Murābiṭūn scholars who withdrew their support of Ghazāli during the 530s/1140s had political reasons for doing so. The *Ihyā'* became increasingly implicated

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 191–192.

¹¹⁴ For Maghribī champions of Ghazāli during this period, see Mannūni, "Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn," pp. 128–129.

¹¹⁵ Serrano Ruano, "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazāli," p. 139.

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, III, pp. 24–25, nr. 73.

¹¹⁷ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Šila*, III, pp. 834–35, nr. 1270. Cf. Bellver, "Ghazāli of al-Andalus," pp. 669–670.

¹¹⁸ See letter of Tāshufīn b. 'Alī to the people of Valencia in "Nuṣūṣ siyāsiyya," ed. H. Monès, pp. 107–113.

¹¹⁹ Serrano Ruano, "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazāli," pp. 137–138; Griffel, *al-Ghazāli's Philosophical Theology*, p. 66.

with the growing mystic-led resistance movements of Ibn Tūmart and Ibn Qasī.¹²⁰ Opposition to mysticism and to Ghazālī in the 530s/1140s was thus of a different nature. A younger, new generation of mystics had by now merged Andalusī mystical teachings with their understanding of the *Iḥyāʾ*, giving rise to a grassroots, nativist, and popular mysticism with its distinctive Andalusī flavor and anti-Murābiṭūn political agenda. With the political decline of the al-Murābiṭūn and the encroachment of the al-Muwahḥidūn from the south and the Christians from the north, attacking Ghazālī became a statement against seditious mystics. The popularity and politicization of Ghazālī's Sufism in the mid-sixth/twelfth century is evidenced by the fact that Ibn Tūmart would seek to rally support for his cause by appealing to Ghazālī and masquerading as his direct disciple.

The most illustrative text that captures this broad scholarly dispute is a *fatwā* issued by the prominent jurist of Cordoba Ibn Rushd al-Jadd in the early sixth/twelfth century in response to inquiries made by a group of unidentified *fuqahāʾ* who opposed mysticism.¹²¹ The *fatwā* discusses the distinction between gnostics who enjoy divine knowledge through inner purification (*ʿarīfūn bi-Llāh*) and jurists who have attained a mastery of God's laws through study (*ʿarīfūn bi-abkām Allāh*). Ibn Rushd's inquirers rejected Ghazālī's hierarchy, which places the "friends of God" (*awliyāʾ Allāh*) at the top, followed by the "divine knowers" (*ʿarīfūn bi-Llāh*), then "firmly grounded scholars" (*ʿulamāʾ rāsikhūn*), and finally "men of virtue" (*ṣālihūn*). They reasoned that formal religious and juridical knowledge (*ʿilm*) takes precedence over religious practices (*ʿamal*), and that jurists are therefore at the top of the pyramid. Underlying this dispute over knowledge (*ʿilm*) versus deeds (*ʿamal*) is the idea of whether prophetic knowledge can be acquired by a heart purified through spiritual exercise and whether Ghazālī's doctrine – described in the chapter of the "marvels of the heart" (*ʿajāʾib al-qalb*) of the *Iḥyāʾ* – that a Sufi's purified heart can be a receptacle of divine knowledge (*maʿrifa*). To many, again, this doctrine ultimately reinforced "Ibn Masarra's doctrine" that a saint could "acquire prophecy."

In true Ashʿarī vein, Ibn Rushd argued that divine knowledge is, by virtue of its content, superior to knowledge about His rulings. The acquisition of divine knowledge, moreover, is an achievement that surpasses the basic demands of religion (*mutaʿaddī*), whereas merely carrying out acts of piety

¹²⁰ Urvoy, "The 'Ulamā' of al-Andalus," p. 867.

¹²¹ Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, III, pp. 1624–1629, nr. 642.

as a basic requirement of religion falls short of divine knowledge (*muqaṣṣir*). Divine knowledge impels the individual to perform good deeds, not the reverse. This type of knowledge overpowers the soul, produces elevated spiritual states (*ahwāl*), impels the knower to perform good deeds, and even generates miracles (sing. *karāma*). By positioning divine knowledge, not mechanical piety, as the central factor in determining proximity to God, Ibn Rushd affirmed mystics' claims to religious supremacy, since it is the Sufis above all who seek to gain superior realms of knowledge. At the same time, it is worth noting that Ibn Rushd omitted the term Sufi, thereby stripping Sufism of epistemological independence and carving a space for al-Murābiṭūn jurists to claim their grounds to both sanctity and religious interpretive authority. Ibn Rushd's *fatwā* was an attempt at reconciliation: while tacitly disapproving of the impiety and excessive legal particularism of the *fuqahā'*, he rejected Sufis' claims to exclusive sanctity, thereby opening the door of sainthood to both the al-Murābiṭūn *faqīh* and the Sufi *faqīr*.¹²² Interestingly, Ibn Rushd exempted the "moderate" and acclaimed Sunnī Sufism of Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), which upheld the authority of the 'ulamā', but he was more reserved with regard to Ghazālī's authority.¹²³ For whereas Qushayrī's Sunnī Sufism was irreproachable, Ghazālī's assimilation into orthodoxy was more contested on account of the aforementioned perceived problems in his understanding of God and prophecy.

Like Ibn Rushd, the Sevillian scholar Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) held similar reservations about Ghazālī's doctrine of the heart. Although he took pride in his association with Ghazālī, he often critiqued his master's teachings and held that it was better to avoid his books that did not deal with pure Ash'arism,¹²⁴ for he was well aware of the influence of philosophy upon his teacher.¹²⁵ He dismissed Ghazālī's idea that the heart can access knowledge of the unseen world (*'ālam al-ghayb*) through spiritual discipline.¹²⁶ For Ibn al-'Arabī as well, this error (sing. *qāṣima*) gave implicit credence to claims of radical Sufis and esoterists (*bāṭiniyya*) and relegated the supremacy of the jurist vis-à-vis the Sufi. Both Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-'Arabī's misgivings about mysticism and the claims of its followers voice a general weariness of al-Murābiṭūn *fuqahā'* with respect to mystics' claims to epistemological superiority. Both strongly favored

¹²² Serrano Ruano, "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī," p. 152.

¹²³ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 67.

¹²⁴ For references in Ibn al-'Arabī's *Awāṣim*, cf. Serrano Ruano's "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī," p. 151.

¹²⁵ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pp. 66–67. ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

the entente. Both surely sensed the potential political threat underlying mystics' claims to religious superiority, and their nervousness was ultimately justified in the face of Ibn Barraġān and Ibn al-'Arīf's popularity, the mystic-led *murīdūn* revolt of Ibn Qasī, and Ibn Tūmart's decisive al-Muwaḥḥidūn uprising.¹²⁷ They were fully aware of the fact that marginalized renunciants, retreaters, and mystics did endorse Ghazālī's division of worldly and otherworldly sciences in opposition to the domination of Mālikī jurists.

Thus the simplistic notion that Ghazālī's works were condemned under the tyranny of an anti-intellectual Murābiṭūn regime and their myopic jurists calls for some cautious filtration.¹²⁸ The crackdown on Ghazālī's works catalyzed epistemological rivalries and buttressed an already entrenched mystical tradition in the early sixth/twelfth century.¹²⁹ Scholars who opposed Ghazālī were not only spurred by his sustained, ad hominem denunciation of pharisaical jurists for their worldliness and their legal splitting of hairs. Their hostility toward Ghazālī's writings was also intellectual. Andalusī jurists knew full well, and modern scholarship confirms, that many deep-seated beliefs held by Ghazālī were inspired by philosophy. For instance, his concept of prophecy expounded in works such as "The Boundary Between Islam and Heresy" (*Faysal al-tafriqa bayna l-Islām wa-l-zandaqa*) was more informed by Avicennan psychology than by Ash'arism.¹³⁰ Moreover, Avicenna influenced Ghazālī's idea of inspired knowledge (*ilhām*).¹³¹ But above all, what alarmed his opponents was the promulgation of an "otherworldly science" (*ilm al-ākhirā*) of mystical unveiling (*mukāshafa*) over and above "worldly sciences" like *fiqh*. This science of unveiling is identified with cosmology, metaphysics, and "the science of the states of the heart and its moral characteristics, [both] good and bad," and its objective is the good

¹²⁷ Serrano Ruano, "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī," p. 156.

¹²⁸ In *Mystical Islam*, pp. 69–71, Baldick simplistically puts it thus: "What is known about Islamic Spain up to the early twelfth century is that there was an immense intolerance on the level of ideas: even the works of the sober Muhammad Ghazali were burnt." (Cf. Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism," p. 197). For an overview of the range of modern scholarly explanations for this event see Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism," p. 192, footnotes 80–82.

¹²⁹ Garden, "al-Ghazālī's contested revival," p. 146. For a good analysis and summary of scholars' explanations for the opposition of the *fuqahā'* to al-Ghazālī's works, cf. Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism," pp. 191–197.

¹³⁰ Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's concept of prophecy"; and Griffel, *al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pp. 68–69.

¹³¹ Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*.

of the afterlife.¹³² His bifurcation of the Islamic sciences into worldly versus otherworldly categories amounted to a claim that the politically connected al-Murābiṭūn legal scholars played second fiddle to the mystics. It is noteworthy that Ghazālī was also accused in Nīshāpūr of holding the belief that a Muslim could attain prophecy through spiritual exercise and through struggling to fulfill the required and voluntary stipulations of the law.¹³³ Like the Nīshāpūrīs, Ghazālī's Andalusī opponent Ibn Ḥamdīn accused Sufis of aspiring to attain the rank of prophecy.¹³⁴

It is worth noting by way of conclusion that the purportedly conservative and rigid al-Murābiṭūn emirs were not retrogrades. By the sixth/twelfth century, they held a great admiration for the cultural sophistication of al-Andalus. For instance, emir 'Alī b. Yūsuf adopted many of al-Andalus' administrative and cultural mores. He surrounded himself with Andalusī poets, artists, intellectuals, men of letters, physicians like Abū Marwān, and secretary-advisors (sing. *kātib*) like Ibn al-Qaṣīra and Ibn 'Abdūn, who worked in his court in Marrakesh. He also hired engineers to build an underground aqueduct system in Marrakesh, and the renowned philosopher and musician Ibn Bāja, emir 'Alī's brother-in-law, served the al-Murābiṭūn as the governor's vizier in Granada and Saragossa for two decades.¹³⁵ The emir's stance against mystical epistemology in general, and Ghazālī in particular, turned hostile when it presented a political threat and served as a rallying point for revolutionary mystics. The al-Murābiṭūn turned against mysticism when mysticism turned against the al-Murābiṭūn.

¹³² Frank, *Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, p. 22 (my translation).

¹³³ Serrano Ruano, "Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī," p. 155.

¹³⁴ Garden, "al-Ghazālī's contested revival," pp. 174–175.

¹³⁵ Julien, *History of North Africa*, p. 89; Messier, "Re-thinking the Almoravids," p. 67.

The Rise of the Andalusī Mu‘tabirūn

The Influence of Ghazālī, Markers of the Mu‘tabirūn Tradition, and the Onset of Institutional Sufism

INTRODUCTION

The dominant narrative about the rise of Andalusī mysticism during the turbulent mid-sixth-/twelfth-century transition from the al-Murābiṭūn to the al-Muwaḥḥidūn dynasty goes back to the pioneering writings of the renowned Hungarian Orientalist Ignáz Goldziher. In his 1903 edition of *A‘azz mā yuṭlab* (“The Supreme Object of Desire”), a treatise penned by the ideological founder of the al-Muwaḥḥidūn movement Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130),¹ Goldziher places Ghazālī at the center of religious controversy in the Muslim West. He alleges that Andalusī mystics were inspired by Ghazālī’s writings on Sufism, legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and Ash‘arī theology (*kalām*) in opposition to the hardened religious discourse of the Mālikī intelligentsia. Ghazālī’s seminal writings, and in particular his encyclopedic *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, was the wedge that broke the hegemony of state-jurists and catalyzed the development of mysticism and Ash‘arī theology in the region.

Rubio,² Urvoy,³ Griffel,⁴ Cornell,⁵ and others refine Goldziher’s argument, maintaining that the introduction of the *Iḥyā’* into al-Andalus formed part of much a larger *epistemological* debate raging across the Muslim West. They argue quite rightly that Mālikī jurists of al-Andalus opposed Sufis and Ghazālī for claiming to access a higher realm of knowledge that surpassed

¹ Goldziher, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumart*, pp. 22–43.

² Rubio, “Juicios de algunos.” ³ Urvoy, “Le manuscrit Ar. 1483 de l’Escorial.”

⁴ Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, p. 362; and idem, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 80.

⁵ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 15–20.

mere legal and scriptural expertise. The *Ihyā'*, which called out Andalusī jurists on their worldliness and excessive legal casuistry and particularism (*abl al-furū'*), challenged the interpretive authority of Mālikism and introduced Sufism as a valid and distinctive category of religious discourse, triggering the fusion of Sufism and Ash'arism in the region. However, echoing Goldziher, these abovementioned scholars mistakenly frame the key players of the formative period, namely Ibn Barraĵān (d. 536/1141), Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1141), and Ibn Qasī (d. 545/1151), as disseminators of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) teachings.

Ghazālī certainly looms large over the political horizon of sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus. The earliest local Sufi hagiographies substantiate the central role which the *Ihyā'* played in matters of doctrine and practice among North Africans and Andalusīs during this period.⁶ However, this dominant account of the rise of Andalusī mysticism gives too much credit to Ghazālī's scholarly influence, and fails to give full consideration to local intellectual developments that had already taken place prior to the *Ihyā'*. By positioning the formative figures as unoriginal thinkers who were at the receiving end of Eastern developments, this account reinforces the problematic idea that al-Andalus was an intellectually peripheral and derivative site of learning. Section I of this chapter interrupts this historiography of medieval Islam by underscoring the intellectual independence of the formative figures vis-à-vis Ghazālī as well as Eastern Arabic Sufism at large. I show that it is only during the *late* sixth/twelfth century, decades after the death of Ibn Barraĵān, Ibn al-'Arīf, and Ibn Qasī, that Ghazālī's oeuvre began to have an intellectual impact upon Andalusī mystical discourse. As we saw in Chapter 1, the initial introduction of the *Ihyā'* to al-Andalus served as a rallying point and a symbol for a much broader debate over the nature of religious knowledge and in the process helped shape the self-image of Andalusī mysticism.

While the *Ihyā'* may have provided a set of arguments for mystics against state-jurists and a treasury of Sufi guidance, the overwhelming textual evidence from this period proves that Ghazālī did not shape the worldview of the prominent middle-term mystics of al-Andalus. First, the mystical teachings of the leading figure of the period, Ibn Barraĵān, were fully developed and elaborated by the time Ghazālī's writings came upon the scene in 495/1102. Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn Qasī espoused a wedding of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and Uṣūl with Neoplatonic thought culled from Ibn Masarra, the

⁶ Rodríguez Mediano, "Biografías almohades," pp. 167–193. Cf. also Garden, "al-Ghazālī's contested revival," pp. 175–177.

treatises of the Brethren of Purity, as well as indirect Fāṭimī-Ismā'īlī influences. Ibn al-'Arīf, for his part, turned to mysticism late in life and shared Ibn Barraḡān's worldview by admission of his own biographers. Ghazālī's influence upon him was probably quite minor, and in any case there is little evidence to prove that he was a promoter of Ghazālīan ideas.

Another important point, addressed in Section II, is the relationship of Andalusī mysticism on the one hand, and Eastern Arabic Sufism on the other. In order to understand the connection between these two traditions, I first discuss the typological lines of demarcation between Sufism, mysticism, and renunciation. I argue that Andalusī mysticism did not grow out of renunciation but developed parallel to it. Moreover, Ibn Masarra, Ibn Barraḡān, Ibn Qasī, and arguably Ibn al-'Arīf were not Sufis, but mystics who called themselves *Mu'tabirūn* (lit. Contemplators, or practitioners of *i'tibār*). Ibn Barraḡān explicitly regarded himself as a promoter of a distinctive trend within the Islamic mystical tradition – a quest for the divine centered on the idea of *'ibra* as found in Ibn Masarra's writings. While lacking many formal markers of a religious "school" such as a hagiographical literary tradition, large-scale independent institutions, and political patronage, the *Mu'tabirūn* tradition may be considered a distinct mystical trend in that its adherents self-identified with a different epistemological category, had shared teachings, kept Sufism at arm's length, drew primarily from Neoplatonic, Brethren, and indirect Ismā'īlī-Fāṭimī sources, and were a powerful intellectual force that set the stage for Ibn 'Arabī's literary outpouring in the seventh/thirteenth century.

Section III discusses the major impact of Abū Madyan Shu'ayb's (d. 594/1197) Sufi *ṭarīqa* movement upon the self-image of Sufism in the Muslim West, as well as the rise of seventh-/thirteenth-century Sufi hagiographies such as Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Tādilī's (d. 627/1230–1) *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl ahl al-ṭaṣawwuf*. These twin forces crystallized the group identity of Sufism. This newly formed transregional identity was then projected back onto the Andalusī *Mu'tabirūn*, who thereafter became identified in the biographical tradition with the catch-all term, "Sufism."

I GHAZĀLĪ'S INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE DURING THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF ANDALUSĪ MYSTICISM

Ibn Barraḡān

Most scholars in the field of Andalusī studies assume that Ghazālī played a key role in *intellectually inspiring* the three leading figures of this period,

Ibn Barrajan, Ibn al-‘Arif, and Ibn Qasi, who in turn adopted his teachings and set out to propagate them throughout the region. This thesis is plainly false. But it continues to be held by scholars of al-Andalus, including Bel, Faure, Gharmīnī, Kuçuk, and others.⁷ To begin with, Ibn Barrajan was already a mystic of repute prior to the influx of Ghazālī’s writings into al-Andalus. Chronologically speaking, the *Ihyā’* was introduced to al-Andalus in 495/1102 by Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī upon his return from the Mashriq.⁸ In other words, Ibn Barrajan (b. ca. 450/1058 and d. 536/1141) would have only heard of Ghazālī in his mid-forties, and there is no textual evidence to show that the latter had any impact upon Ibn Barrajan’s thought and his formative education. By 495/1102, Ibn Barrajan was not a young, impressionable figure but a noted scholar and mystic with two major works to his name. The first was his uṣūlī work on Ḥadīth-Qur’ānic concordance entitled “The Guidebook to the Paths of Guidance” (*al-Irshād ilā subul al-rashād*). The second is his monumental, trendsetting, and heavily mystical “Commentary on the Beautiful Names of God” (*Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*) in which the fundamentals of his teachings are already developed in detail. Ghazālī’s writings, in other words, did not form part of Ibn Barrajan’s core curriculum during his formative years and did not leave an imprint on his early seminal writings. Nor is there a pronounced turn to Ghazālīanism in his later exegetical works, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

It is true that Ibn Barrajan earned the title “Ghazālī of al-Andalus” during his own lifetime. This honorific epithet befits our author whose legacy was also – like Ghazālī – initially contested and subsequently lauded by scholars in the Muslim West. However, it is important to emphasize that this epithet does not imply that he was intellectually indebted to or even influenced by Ghazālī’s thought. First, pairing up prominent luminaries of the Muslim West with Mashriqī counterparts was a common practice among Andalusī and Maghribī biographers, and Ibn Barrajan’s epithet is to be appreciated in the context of this longstanding biographical custom.⁹

⁷ See Bel, “Le Sufisme en Occident musulman”; Demerseman, “Le Maghreb a-t-il une marque ghazzalienne?”; *EF*², “Ibn al-‘Arif,” “Ibn Barrajan,” and “Ibn Qasi,” (A. Faure); Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 193.

⁸ See al-Mannūnī, “Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn fi manzūr,” pp. 126–127.

⁹ To name a few examples, two Andalusī poets, Ibn Hānī (d. 362/973) and Ibn Darrāj (d. 421/1030), came to be called respectively the “Mutanabbī of the West” and the “Mutanabbī of al-Andalus”; Ismā‘īl b. Badr (d. 351/962) earned the title of “the Andalusī Euclid”; the Mālikī jurist Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) was lauded as “the Minor Mālik”; the celebrated North African Sufi Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198) was hailed the “Junayd of the West”; the theologian Abū ‘Amr al-Salājī (d. 574/1178) of Fez

Second, Ibn Barraġān earned the honorific title “Ghazālī of al-Andalus” most likely at the tail end of his career, after both Ibn Barraġān and Ghazālī's works had circulated throughout the region. That Ibn Barraġān was likened to Ghazālī denotes a function of parallel regional importance, an attachment to mystical doctrine, opposition to Mālikī legal pedantism, and perhaps a hint of anti-Murābiṭūn politics.

Ibn Barraġān probably only heard of Ghazālī's works for the first time in the year 503/1109 when they were put to the torch. The ensuing period of thirty years (503/1109–536/1141) between the two book-burnings may have been when Ibn Barraġān actually read parts of the *Iḥyā'* or Ghazālī's commentary on the divine names (*al-Maqṣad al-asnā*). Ibn Barraġān had an inquisitive mind, and although his basic worldview was already fully developed, there is no reason to suppose that he did not read the *Iḥyā'* or benefit from Ghazālī whatsoever. However, what is clear is that on the whole, Ibn Barraġān's later works (i.e., his two Qur'ānic commentaries) do not display a change in doctrinal orientation, nor do they emphasize Ghazālīan themes such as the division of worldly and otherworldly sciences, criticisms of worldly scholars ('*ulamā'* *al-dunyā*), Sufi psychology, and ethics. I have only detected one minute change in Ibn Barraġān's later works. He displays more sympathy for the idea of “assuming the character traits of God” (*takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh*) in his later works than he does in the *Sharḥ*, possibly on account of his exposure to Ghazālī, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Ibn al-'Arīf

Ibn al-'Arīf was born in Almeria in 481/1088. His father, a native of Tangier, had been a platoon leader ('*arīf*) or commander of a band of forty soldiers in the local night guard (*ṣāhib ḥaras al-layl*) in the *tā'ifa* period.¹⁰ Ibn al-'Arīf is best known for his short systematic treatise on Sufi ethics and stations of spiritual wayfarers entitled “Splendors of the Mystical Sessions” (*Maḥāsin al-majālis*).¹¹ The *Maḥāsin al-majālis* is undoubtedly Sufi in its general orientation, and is moreover heavily indebted to the writings of the Sufi Ḥanbalī 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-

has sometimes been referred to as the “Juwaynī of the Maghrib”; and the Maghribī Sufi polymath and logician Abū 'Alī al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) was compared with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. In each case, what is at stake is not intellectual indebtedness but high scholarly status.

¹⁰ Cook, *The Hundred Years War*, pp. 34–35. ¹¹ Edited by Asín Palacios, Paris, 1933.

Harawī (d. 481/1088).¹² In his own day, however, Ibn al-'Arīf's scholarly repute primarily rested on his mastery of Qur'ānic readings (*qirā'āt*) and Ḥadīth, subjects that he was drawn to from an early age in Almeria despite his father's opposition to the latter's scholarly interests. Ibn al-'Arīf counts the Almerian judge Abū al-Ḥasan al-Barjī among his formal teachers – who in 503/1109 spoke out against the burning of Ghazālī's books. Another instructor was Ṭalamankī's student 'Abd al-Baqī b. Burriyāl and the eminent Ḥadīth expert Abū 'Alī al-Ṣafadī (d. 514/1120). Also, according to Ibn Bashkuwāl, Ibn al-'Arīf was educated by a number of the biographer's own teachers. This means that Ibn al-'Arīf would have studied under Ibn Manzūr's Ḥadīth students, as well as under the judge Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī.

Ibn al-'Arīf was some thirty years younger than Ibn Barrajan and therefore belonged to a younger generation of Andalusī mystics. Given the generational gap, one would expect him to have been deeply influenced by Ghazālī's works. For whereas Ibn Barrajan came across Ghazālī in his forties or fifties, Ibn al-'Arīf presumably came into contact with Ghazālī's writings in his mid-teens during his early educational formation. Moreover, he reportedly sat at the feet of not only Barjī, but also a number of Ghazālī's direct students who had settled in Almeria around this time, including Balawī and Balaghī. Nonetheless, Ghazālī's influence on Ibn al-'Arīf during his formative years was probably negligible, since the biographers point out that Ibn al-'Arīf was solely drawn to *qirā'āt* and Ḥadīth in his youth. As a latecomer to mysticism, Ibn al-'Arīf's deep reading of Ghazālī's writings would have only taken place late in life once he too had established himself as a scholar of repute. We are told that after teaching Qur'ānic readings in Almeria and Saragossa, he worked as market overseer (*wālī al-ḥisba*) in Valencia where he came into contact with the practice of renunciation and Sufi chivalry (*futuwwa*). His contemporaneous biographer Ibn Bashkuwāl made no reference to his interests in mysticism, noting instead that he drew followers from around the Iberian Peninsula and that his lectures attracted ardent worshippers (*'ubbād*) and renunciants (*zubbād*).¹³ Ibn al-'Arīf's indebtedness

¹² Halfff has shown that the *Maḥāsīn al-majālis* borrows heavily from the contents and structure of *al-'Ilal al-dākhila fī al-maqāmāt* of Abū Ismā'īl 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī of Herat. Ibn al-'Arīf's chapter on love (*maḥabbā*), moreover, is largely paraphrased from the *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*. See Halfff, "Le Maḥāsīn al-Maḡālis d'Ibn al-'Arīf."

¹³ Ibn al-'Arīf's popularity is attested to by a number of contemporary sources. See Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, pp. 136–137, nr. 176; Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ḡam*, pp. 27–40, nr. 14; Tādīlī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 118, nr. 18.

to Anṣārī in the *Maḥāsīn al-majālis* is beyond doubt. Ghazālī, on the other hand, may have been one of the many sources of influence at play in Ibn al-ʿArīf's later life, along with Ibn Masarra, Ibn Barraġān, and other Eastern authors like Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), and Sahl al-Tustarī.

Ibn al-ʿArīf can be considered a borderline figure who straddled both the Mu'tabirūn tradition and Eastern classical Sufism. It is noteworthy that he was one of Ibn Barraġān's most prominent admirers and arguably a disciple.¹⁴ One of his biographers claims that he "professed the same doctrine" as Ibn Barraġān, and it seems that local Andalusī developments were important to Ibn al-ʿArīf's mysticism.¹⁵ Both shared at least two students, namely Sakūnī and Ibn Ghālib, and Ibn al-ʿArīf seems to have played an important role in popularizing Ibn Barraġān's teachings regionally. Ibn al-ʿArīf explicitly acknowledged the Sevillan's spiritual and intellectual superiority and sought his counsel on at least one occasion. The biographers confirm an almost master-disciple rapport by stating that the two held identical doctrines and that Ibn Barraġān had preeminence (*shufūf*) over him.¹⁶ It is perhaps on account of his late conversion to mysticism that Ibn al-ʿArīf did not formally study with Ibn Barraġān. In his letters, he repeatedly expressed his regret for not having had the opportunity to spend more time under Ibn Barraġān's charge, and for turning to mysticism late in life.¹⁷

¹⁴ Based on the deferential tone by which Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 536/1161) addresses Ibn Barraġān in one of their correspondences, Nwyia and Gharminī concluded that the former was a Sufi disciple of our author. (Nwyia, "Note sur quelques fragments"; Gharminī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 130.)

¹⁵ *Mu'ġam*, p. 19, nr. 14; Cf. *Quest*, p. 52.

¹⁶ Asín Palacios held that the prominent Ibn al-ʿArīf was Ibn Barraġān's spiritual master, a far-fetched speculation given that he was about thirty years younger than Ibn Barraġān. This master-disciple relationship was reversed by Nwyia's edition of Ibn al-ʿArīf's correspondences with Ibn Barraġān in which he addresses the Sevillan as "my Shaykh" and "my imām." See Nwyia's critical edition of *Rasā'il Ibn al-ʿArīf*. See also Ibn al-ʿArīf, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, pp. 108–110. Ibn al-ʿArīf's letters of correspondence assembled by his disciple Abū Bakr ʿAtīq b. Mu'min (d. 548/1156) are arranged according to proximity and importance. The missive to Ibn Barraġān is placed first, followed by letters to friends and disciples of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Khalaf b. Ghālib, and ending with Ibn Qasī and Ibn Mundhir. In comparison with the other letters, the epistle to Ibn Barraġān stands out and is worded with exceptional reverence and humility. Ibn Barraġān is the only scholar addressed as shaykh and imām. The preeminence (*shufūf*) of Ibn Barraġān over Ibn al-ʿArīf is confirmed by Ibn al-Zubayr (Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ġam*, p. 19, nr. 14).

¹⁷ He says in reference to himself: *man law wajada sabīlan la-ttadkhabha fī dhālik al-kanaf maqīlan* (*Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, p. 108).

Ibn Qasī

In sharp contrast to Ibn al-‘Arīf and Ibn Barraġān, who were moderate, orthodox mystics and political quietists, Ibn Qasī, like Ibn Tūmart in North Africa, was a radical millenarian and anti-Murābiṭūn insurgent (*thā‘ir*). His writings, moreover, display much stronger Ismā‘īlī esotericist (*bāṭinī*) tendencies. He established a sectarian city-state (*ṭā‘ifa*) in Silves (*Shalba*). Silves, the former capital of Algarve located southeast of present-day Portugal, fell to his *murīdūn* revolt only one year after the arrest and death of Ibn Barraġān and Ibn Qasī in 536/1141. It is surprising that the al-Murābiṭūn failed to anticipate Ibn Qasī’s subversive political activities before his revolution broke out, and instead arrested the much less radical Ibn Barraġān and Ibn al-‘Arīf. It is likely that the death of the latter triggered the revolutionary activism of Ibn Qasī and his followers. It seems that by the time the *murīdūn* revolt took place, the al-Murābiṭūn were already losing significant control over much of the Iberian Peninsula.

Patching together the historical events which led up to his defeat and ghastly execution is complicated by the fact that his earliest al-Muwaḥḥidūn biographers took issue with his subversive political activities. Moreover, little of Ibn Qasī’s life is known before he entered upon the political scene. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Murrākushī’s *al-Mu‘jib fī talkhīṣ al-maghrib*, penned in 621/1224, is the earliest source and is followed by Ibn al-Abbār’s *al-Hulla al-siyarā*. Appraisals of Ibn Qasī as a “sower of corruption”¹⁸ (*min du‘āt al-ḥitan*) who carried out his efforts against the state by possessing the minds of the ignorant, staging pseudomiracles, and claiming sainthood (*wilāya*) and titles such as imām and mahdī have mired his reputation. Further, the politically charged al-Muwaḥḥidūn allegation that Ibn Qasī’s claims to Sufi realization were disingenuous, serving merely as a smokescreen for worldly ambitions, predominates many modern studies.¹⁹

Motivated by spiritual reasons, Ibn Qasī renounced his leisurely life as overseer (*mushrif*) of the government treasury (*makhzan*). After selling his belongings, he devoted himself to renunciation and trekked through the troubled provinces of al-Andalus. In Almeria, he claimed falsely to have met Ibn al-‘Arīf. He is also reported to have studied the works of Ghazālī

¹⁸ Murrākushī, *Mu‘jib*, pp. 309–310.

¹⁹ For ‘Aḥfī, Ibn Qasī’s political activism disqualifies him as a mystique. See also Monès, “Nuṣūṣ siyāsiyya,” pp. 103–104; ‘Iṣmat Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-murābiṭīn*, p. 449.

(d. 505/1111) in Almeria in order to attract a following. The reasons that triggered Ibn Qasī's violent turn against the al-Murābiṭūn are probably a complex combination of al-Muwaḥḥidūn theology, Brethren cosmology, claims to Messianism, a spiritualizing vision of Islam, the hair-splitting legal pedantism of the Mālikī jurists, and the disturbing wealth of the state-patronized 'ulamā'.²⁰ The historian Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374) reports that he first attempted to subjugate the fort of Monteagudo (*Mantaqūt*) with his followers, who were based in the convent (*rābiṭa*) of Jilla, a hotbed for Ghazālian and al-Murābiṭūn opposition. After a failed attempt, he set west for Mértola (*Marṭūla*). He captured the city with the help of his comrade Ibn al-Qābila and 70 *murīds* in 539/1144.²¹ His rule lasted less than a year.

With the aid of two rebel chiefs, Ibn Wazīr and Muḥammad Ibn al-Mundhir (d. 558/1184), Ibn Qasī established himself as imām of Silves, Evora, Béja, Huelva, Niebla.²² He then organized two ambitious forays into Seville and Cordoba, but the disastrous outcome of these missions bred internal dissent and caused power struggles with Sīdrāy b. Wazīr, the governor of Beja. By now the al-Murābiṭūn were overthrown in North Africa but retained some power in al-Andalus until 543/1148. In need of a patron, the weakened rebel solicited the al-Muwaḥḥidūn caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī al-Kūmī (d. 558/1162) in Marrakesh in 540/1145. He was received generously on condition of giving up all his titles, which were reserved for the founder of the al-Muwaḥḥidūn movement, al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) reports in *K. al-Ibar* that after Ibn Qasī's correspondence with the caliph, 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Maymūn was put in charge of a counterattack. He was supplied with reinforcements by the caliph and Yūsuf b. Makhlūf in Sabta.

Ibn Qasī played an active role in the first al-Muwaḥḥidūn attempt at conquering al-Andalus from Cadiz in 541/1146–7, with the hopes of securing the governorship of Silves (*Shalab*). However, his power dwindled as the towns of Jerez, Arcos, Ronda, Niebla, Béja, Mértola, Seville, and Badajoz respectively capitulated to al-Muwaḥḥidūn control.

²⁰ In the *Khal'*, Ibn Qasī complains about the wealth accumulated by jurists of his day; *Khal'*, p. 42.

²¹ *EL*², "Ibn Qasī," (A. Faure).

²² Dreher devotes an extensive study to the political dimensions of Ibn Qasī's career and titles. Given that his ancestors were Christians from Silves (*shilb*), the function of imām typically reserved for a descendent from the House of the Prophet (*abl al-bayt*) here means that he was a Muslim leader by virtue of his sanctity and charisma. See Dreher, "Das Imamamt des Islamischen Mystikers."

Finally, when in 545/1151 'Abd al-Mu'min called for all Andalusī governors to renounce their governorships, Ibn Qasī refused. His insubordination isolated him once again in Silves. This time he turned to the Christian king of Portugal Alfonso Henrique (*Ibn al-Rīq*) at Coimbra, thereby placing his own citizens in danger. When this exceptionable pact became known publicly, a group of dissenters conspired against him and his former partner Ibn al-Mundhir in 546/1151, decapitating Ibn Qasī and fixing his head to the end of the very lance that had been given to him by the Portuguese sovereign.²³

Ultimately, his *murīd* struggle against the al-Murābiṭūn and the al-Muwaḥḥidūn was unsuccessful, plagued as it was by strategic incompetence, military setbacks and internal rivalries. Ibn Qasī's movement was emblematic of the general sociopolitical and economic discontent of sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus as it transitioned from al-Murābiṭūn to al-Muwaḥḥidūn control (541–668/1146–1269). Ibn Qasī embodied the first of many political expressions of Sufism in the region. Although he failed politically, his revolution weakened the al-Murābiṭūn's grip in al-Andalus and, most importantly for this chapter, further cemented the incipient Andalusī mystical movement.²⁴

Ibn Qasī penned an abstruse and highly literary mystical treatise entitled "Discarding the Two Shoes and Borrowing Light from the Site of the Two Feet" (*Khal' al-na'layn wa-'qtibās al-nūr min mawḍi' al-qadamayn*), which was influenced by undercurrents of Massarism, Ismā'īlism, the Brethren, Neoplatonism, and Hermeticism.²⁵ This work represents the confluence of Ishrāqī, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Brethren, Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī, and Masarrī ideas circulating in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus.²⁶ As demonstrated by Ebstein in a recent study, the extent to which Ghazālī's writings played into his treatise *Khal' al-na'layn* was, if anything, minor.²⁷ Thus, while Ghazālī's writings were politically important for Ibn Qasī because they provided him with a platform for his revolutionary agenda, they were intellectually secondary to Ibn Qasī's writings in al-Andalus.

²³ This is only one version of the story of Ibn Qasī's demise. Ibn Khaldūn claims that he lost the support of Silves after siding with 'Abd al-Mu'min. He was tricked into opening his palace gate, beheaded, and his head placed on the lance offered to him by the Portuguese king. Ibn Khaldūn, *K. al-Ibar*, VI, pp. 485–489.

²⁴ Fierro, "The qāḍī as ruler," p. 88. ²⁵ Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Sufi?"

²⁶ See Amrānī's introductory study: Ibn Qasī, *Khal' al-na'layn*, p. 9; see also Dreher, "Das Imamat des Islamischen Mystikers."

²⁷ See Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Sufi?"

II WERE IBN BARRAJĀN, IBN AL-‘ARĪF, AND IBN QASĪ
“SUFIS”?

In order to answer the question of whether or not the formative mystics of al-Andalus were “Sufis,” it is important to demarcate the terms “Sufism,” “mysticism,” and “renunciation.” The very applicability of the terms “Sufism” and “mysticism” have been contested by modern scholars on various grounds, although the two categories are often used synonymously in Islamic Studies.²⁸ Lines of demarcation are blurry because mystics, Sufis, and renunciants all generally aspire to a deepened realization of the teachings of Islam, however conceived, and seek intensified experiences of supranormal realities. Its adherents commit themselves in various ways to the attainment of felicity and to achieving an intensified experience of the beyond and heightened powers of perception through supererogatory devotions and contemplative exercises.²⁹

Confusion arises from the fact that Sufism has been defined in a variety of ways by medieval and modern scholars, and there is no consensus on its definition. Medieval Muslim chroniclers and modern scholars have typically applied the term liberally to a broad range of religious movements in Islam. Movements that operated in various historical contexts, drew from disparate sources, emphasized certain themes (inner purification, renunciation of the world, community activism, astrology, etc.) over others, and espoused a range of cosmological doctrines that varied in sophistication and intricacy are all labeled “Sufi.” Under such broad terms, Sufi hagiographical works may include the well-known “master of sharī‘a and ḥaqīqa” Junayd (d. 298/910), who was staunchly anti-theological; love-drunk renunciants of Baṣra like Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 185/801); philosophical Sufi exponents like Ibn ‘Arabī; and early Shī‘ī traditions and Ismā‘īlī developments.

If one takes “Sufism” generically to denote any movement in Islam that seeks an intensified religious experience beyond the basic essentials of law and theology, then figures like Ibn Barraĵān and his peers can be justifiably labeled “Sufis.”³⁰ In this broad sense, the term “Almerian school of Sufism,” which was coined by the preeminent Spanish scholar Asín

²⁸ For a discussion of the term Sufism, see Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. 1–31. For some, Sufism is a constructed category that is entrenched in the Protestant Christian tradition. See Omid Safi, “Bargaining with *Baraka*.” For a discussion of the problems associated with using the term mystic, see Chittick, *Faith and Practice in Islam*, p. 168.

²⁹ Sviri, “Sufism: Reconsidering terms,” p. 20.

³⁰ Sufism is employed in this way as a catch-all term in Heck’s “Sufism – What is it Exactly?”

Palacios and endorsed by most subsequent literature in the field of Andalusī studies, is functional and suitable. In fact, Ibn Barraġān's works can be called Sufi because they were consumed by Sufis from the seventh/thirteenth century onward, and his biographers readily describe him as Sufi as well. In addition, it is crucial to note that in the Andalusī context, Ibn Barraġān was perceived by later generations as a "Sufi" inasmuch as he endorsed Sufi epistemology: namely, the ability of friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*) to access higher realms of knowledge through spiritual exercises and the notion that holy men can perform evidentiary miracles (*karāmāt al-awliyā'*). Hence the biographer Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260) calls him a renunciant (*zāhid*) who achieved "realization" (*taḥqīq*) in Sufism. Echoing the former, Dhahabī (d. 749/1348) extols our author as the "master of the Sufis" (*shaykh al-ṣūfiyya*),³¹ while Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1448) omitted the description "renunciant" from Ibn Barraġān's biography and referred to him exclusively as a Sufi.

That said, the problem with using the term "Sufism" generically for sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusīs is that it fails to take the retrospective biases of the chroniclers into account. Our understanding of who was a Sufi in the Muslim West is largely influenced by the North African Sufi biographers, especially Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Tādilī (d. 627/1230–1). The latter, who engineered the paradigm of the Maghribī saint, understood holy men (*awliyā' Allāh*) of all stripes to be "Sufi." He applied this term to nearly any paragon of piety who lived up to the standards idealized by the hagiographers. By anachronistically calling "Sufi" those figures who did not think of themselves as such, the hagiographers of the Muslim West – as of the East, including Sulamī (d. 412/1021) in his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* and Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī in his *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* (d. 430/1038) – afforded credibility to their own incipient tradition at the expense of historical accuracy.³² Tādilī's work features entries for so-called Sufis who in fact were outstanding exemplars of community activism (*iṣlāḥ*), altruism (*īthār*), or adherence to the Qur'ānic (and often antigovernmental) precept of "commanding the good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*). These non-Sufi precursors were often admired for their extreme scrupulousness, caution (*wara'*), humility,

³¹ See relevant biographical references in Chapter III.

³² Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 6–7. See Melchert, "Baṣran Origins of Classical Sufism"; and Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism*, for an analysis of the role of the Sufi *ṭabaqāt* genre in defining the self-perception of Sufis from the fifth/eleventh to ninth/fifteenth century. See also Renard, *Friends of God*, for a thematic survey of Islamic hagiographical literature.

charity, or wholehearted adherence to the behavioral model of the Prophet (*sunna*), and other normative Islamic virtues. Even entries for rural renunciants, urban scholars, holy warriors (*mujāhidūn*), and eponymous tribal leaders found their way into Tādilī’s works.

North African hagiographical works of the seventh/thirteenth century are replete with references to the terms *ṣūfī* and *mutaṣawwif*, while pre-*tā’ifa* biographical dictionaries very rarely employ the term and its cognates.³³ One of the earliest references to Sufis as a “distinct party” (*nihla*) in al-Andalus is found in Ibn Ḥamdīn’s (d. 508/1114) refutation of Ghazālī where he identifies Sufis with distinctive invocatory practices (*dhikr*).³⁴ As well, Sufis were attacked by Ibn Ḥazm and must have therefore been numerically noticeable.³⁵ However, it is difficult to ascertain whether these groups actually self-identified as Sufi, or whether they were labeled as such by Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ḥamdīn. What is certain is that mystics of al-Andalus self-identified and were viewed as a distinct pietist-intellectual movement with a growing social impetus in the fifth-/eleventh-century *tā’ifa* period.

For the purposes of the present study, the term “mysticism” or “philosophical mysticism” denotes the Neoplatonized, knowledge-centered quest for the divine by groups like the Mu‘tabirūn who sought to penetrate the ineffable mysteries of the unseen world (*‘ālam al-ghayb*). These mystics looked to the beyond, and sought to achieve a concrete realization of God and the otherworld primarily through the study of cosmology, cycles of time and divine determination, letter speculations, and other occult sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-gharība*).³⁶ “Renunciation” by contrast is a broader, behaviorally oriented movement that rarely exhibits an interest

³³ ‘Abd Allāh b. Naṣr (d. 315/927) is, as Asín Palacios has shown, the first to bear the appellation *al-Ṣūfī* (*Abenmasarra y su escuela*, p. 145). Marín has uncovered names of other figures of the late fourth/tenth with this surname. The term *badallabdāl* also appears in the tenth century in association with certain very holy men. These terms were used in a more general and less technical Sufi hierarchical sense. Marín, “*Zuhbād of al-Andalus*,” pp. 106–107.

³⁴ Garden, “al-Ghazālī’s contested revival,” p. 169. This refutation is not extant.

³⁵ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in Al-Andalus.”

³⁶ The term “occult sciences” refers to a broad range of areas such as astrology, alchemy, talismans, chiromancy, sciences of the letters and numerology (*jafr*, *‘ilm al-ḥurūf*). These share a broad common language of symbolism and cosmology with Late Antiquity and cover a vast range of writings from elaborate theoretical treatments to popular, practical, folkloric uses. In this case, the more metaphysical/cosmological sciences occupy the thought of the Andalusī Mu‘tabirūn. While alchemy and astrology are not emphasized, speculations about the significance of letters and cycles of time and divine determination feature prominently in their works.

in cosmology and occultism. Renunciants like Ibn Masarra who took an interest in, say, cosmology, did so *qua* mystics. The Sevillian renunciant tradition discussed in Chapter 1 is perhaps the most notable expression of Andalusī renunciation.

I employ Sufism in the technical and historical sense in reference to the movement which began to crystallize as a self-conscious group beginning in the second half of the third/ninth century to the fifth/eleventh century with the emergence of Arabic compilations of Sufi lore in the central and eastern lands of Islam, especially around Baghdād, Baṣra and the region of Korasān. "Sufism" is primarily a subjective, ethically oriented pietist movement that displays both renunciatory and mystical tendencies. Sufis look within. They are theorists of the renunciant way of life who chronicled the ethical and psychological transformations of the soul on its journey to God. Classical manuals of Sufism such as *K. al-Luma' fī al-taṣawwuf* of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988), *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996), and the *Risāla al-Qushayriyya* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074) conceive of the spiritual path primarily in psychological terms, as an ascending progression of the soul through various states and stations (*maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*) of ethical perfection. Cherished discussions include repentance, scrupulousness, renunciation of the world, poverty, patience, gratitude, trust in God, acceptance, love, annihilation, and subsistence in God. Fear of hell and longing for paradise are also central themes in these texts.

Tellingly, the term "*taṣawwuf*" derives in all likelihood from *ṣūf*, "wool," in reference to groups of renunciants in early Islam who took to wearing coarse woolen garments and exhibited an aversion of worldly pleasures. Sufis, like their predecessors in Late Antiquity, were wool-wearing renunciants (*mutaṣawwifa*, lit. woolies) who followed the clothing habits of prophets and holy men including Elijah and John the Baptist.³⁷ Authors of Sufi compilations were in one way or another associated with the Sufi tradition and usually functioned in the context of a communal affiliation under the direction of a master. These communal affiliations often traced their lineage to the circle that formed around the famous Baghdādī figure Junayd (d. 298/910), the "master of the two camps [of Law and Truth]" (*sayyid al-tā'ifatayn*).

The Sufi manuals do not stress "mystical" sciences such as cosmology, cycles of time and divine determination, astrology, or letter speculations,

³⁷ Sviri, "Sufism: Reconsidering Terms," p. 22.

as much as they emphasize praxis and man’s inner realm. Sufis wrote extensively about the observation of supererogatory acts of worship (*nawāfil*) such as fasts, prayers, night vigils, meditations, and seclusions, alongside a meticulous observance of the mandatory religious rites (*far-ā’id*). They delineated rules of proper conduct, the lives of saints and their ecstatic sayings (*shaṭabāt*), the perfection of ethical behavior, deepening of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), god-consciousness (*taqwā*), and fighting the ego (*nafs*). The journey through the states and stations and the active performance of supererogatory spiritual exercises alongside the mandates of Islamic law were understood to produce intensified experiences of God.³⁸

Typologically speaking, this body of literature exhibits a different thematic focus from the literature that emerged in al-Andalus at the pens of mystics like Ibn Masarra, Ibn Barraĵān, and Ibn Qasī. The Mu‘tabirūn lay more stress upon knowing God than the soul and exhibit distinct Neoplatonic and Brethren leanings. They took discussions of man’s inner world as a point of departure but focused more upon the realm of God, its modality, relationship to creation, and the ways in which creation reflects God. Themes of the Mu‘tabirūn, which are sometimes dubbed as “theosophy,” “philosophical Sufism,” or “philosophical mysticism,” emphasize the theme of parallel worlds (*taṭābuqlintizām al-adnā wa-l-asfal*); the principle of correspondence between man, creation, and revelation; the function of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) or Universal Servant (*al-‘abd al-kullī*) as intermediary between the divine and creation; and God’s signs in creation (*āyāt Allāh*) as windows into the otherworld (*i’tibār*).

Labeling Ibn Masarra and Ibn Barraĵān “mystics” (rather than “sufis”) or better yet Mu‘tabirūn privileges the categories that they themselves privileged and honors the understanding that they had of their own place within the Islamic tradition. For they neither self-identified with renunciation nor Sufism, and they had qualms about both traditions. For instance, Ibn Barraĵān instructed his followers to renounce worldly pleasures, but disapproved of the extroverted and often extreme ascetic tendencies of the Sevillian renunciants, whom he found to be intellectually pedestrian. He also expressed his ambivalence toward certain extreme aspects of Sufism. He understood Sufism in the narrower historical sense delineated above, and probably never came into direct contact with Sufis of the East since he never left the Muslim West. Ibn Barraĵān understood Sufis to be chroniclers of renunciant patterns of behavior, and was a critical admirer of this

³⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

tradition.³⁹ He occasionally referred to them as “the folk” (*al-qawm*),⁴⁰ or “ecstatic lovers” (*al-wājidīn*),⁴¹ and quoted directly from works of Sufis like Makkī and Tustarī (see Chapter 4). He acknowledged *taṣawwuf* as a distinct and legitimate religious discipline (*fann*) with a distinct shared vocabulary.⁴² He spoke highly of Sufi piety, but had misgivings about the sincerity of figures like Bisṭāmī (d. 264/878) and Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). He was critical of “extreme” Sufis who made false ecstatic utterances after experiencing intense unveilings. Some, he believed, were led to call themselves the Real/Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), whereas in truth one can only realize God’s name the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) by being a servant of the Real. Yet paradoxically, Ibn Barraĵān was fond of quoting poetry from Ḥallāj’s *dīwān*,⁴³ and praised “the realized Sufis” who witnessed God’s signs in the cosmos. He also conceded that a select few were elevated to the point of witnessing God’s acts, then His attributes, and finally His Essence, which is why, in his words, they continually refer to God as the Real (*al-ḥaqq*).⁴⁴ These wayfarers achieved such high stations that they could only witness the divine Subject (*fā’il*) and were oblivious to the created object (*maf’ūl*).⁴⁵

While Ibn Barraĵān had mixed admiration for Sufis of the East, he was largely disinterested in Sufi discussions of the psychology of the soul and tended to regard Sufism primarily as an Eastern phenomenon. Although the Mu'tabirūn conceived of the mystical quest as a crossing (*ibra*) from the visible world to the unseen via contemplation of God’s signs and self-disclosures, Sufism conceived of the journey from the human state to the divine proximity as a purificatory progression of the soul through a variety of states and stations (*aḥwāl*, *maqāmāt*). While the crossing to the unseen world through natural signs (*āyāt*) was central to Ibn Barraĵān’s thought, Sufis focused primarily on outlining the hierarchy of the spiritual states and stations in their treatises and manuals. This Sufi paradigm of wayfaring along the spiritual path, with its elaborate discussions of states and stations, was not Ibn Barraĵān’s primary concern. Whenever he came

³⁹ Obviously, Ibn Barraĵān had no knowledge of the formal Sufi orders (*ṭarīqa*), initiatic chains (*silsila*) and initiation rites (*bay‘a*) that had just begun to emerge at his time in the East. He never mentions the indispensability of a spiritual master (*shaykh/murshid*), and the function of spiritual guidance (*tarbiya*) is hardly ever mentioned. These institutional *ṭarīqa* traditions began to take form under Abū Madyan several decades after Ibn Barraĵān’s death.

⁴⁰ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 302. ⁴¹ *Īdāḥ*, ¶348. ⁴² *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 302.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 119. The same verse is quoted in *Īdāḥ*, ¶156. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 139.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 135–136.

across the topic of, say, the state of realizing reliance upon God (*tawakkul*), he referred his readers to the works of Sufis. He kept such discussions brief, and often ended them by remarking that “others”, i.e. Eastern Sufis had already discussed the psychology of the soul, “so there is no need for reiteration.”⁴⁶ Thus from Ibn Barraġān’s perspective, Sufism was still a largely Mashriqī phenomenon that paralleled his own mystical tradition. This point comes across clearly in his major Qur’ān commentary, where Ibn Barraġān gives his own account of the rise of Sufism. At the end of his account,⁴⁷ he concludes that Sufis “possess technical expressions, aims, and terms that *they employ among themselves*.”⁴⁸ This was not a gesture of humility on Ibn Barraġān’s part, but his articulation of the place of Sufism within the Islamic tradition as he saw it.

It should be pointed out that later seventh-/thirteenth-century Andalusī and Maghribī mystics, including Ibn ‘Arabī, Tilimsānī, and Ibn Sab‘īn, who emerged from the Mu‘tabirūn tradition, also had great respect for Sufism, but did not consider Sufis to have reached the utmost goal of human perfection.⁴⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī referred to human beings who have

⁴⁶ In the *Sharḥ*, most discussions of Sufi states and stations feature in the introduction. See his discussion of the station of love as the highest *maqām* where lover and Beloved are united and where he cites verses quoted by al-Junayd in end of *faṣl* 32 *Sharḥ maqāmāt al-yaqīn wa-abwāl al-mūqīnīn* in *Qūt al-qulūb*, under heading *dbikr makhāwif al-muḥibbīn wa-maqāmātihim fī al-khawf* (See Ibn Barraġān’s *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 32). For a discussion of annihilation (*fanā*) and the station of *tawḥīd*, see *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 34. For a brief overview of Sufi virtues, and of the station of trust in God (*tawakkul*), see *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 281, 306. In two sections of the *Sharḥ* (ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 281, 309) Ibn Barraġān cuts short his discussion of the station of trust in God (*tawakkul*), noting that others have already analyzed the subject in sufficient detail. For a discussion of practical Sufism and the virtues, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 557–566.

⁴⁷ In summary, he states that following both the death of the Prophet and the problems that ensued under the reign of the Rightly Guided caliphs (*khulafā’ rāshidūn*), the Muslim community was afflicted by bloody revolutions, the destruction of the Ka‘ba, and massacre of countless Companions and Muslims at the hands of different Umayyad generals. At this time of tribulation, many pietists retreated into hospices (*zāwiya*), mosques, and hermitages (*ribāt*) along the borderlands of the Muslim empire. There, in the fortified outposts, they took to purifying their character traits and practicing spiritual poverty. They emulated the pious People of the Bench (*ahl al-ṣuffa*) and, subsequently came to be called “Sufis,” a derivative from “self-purification” (*taṣāfi*). The Sufis clung to the Book, to poverty, patient restraint (*ṣabr*), hunger, fear, sadness, scrupulous piety (*wara’*), asceticism (*zud*), truthfulness (*ṣidq*), gratitude, and other virtues, and they sought both mystical and exoteric knowledge (*‘ilm, ma’rifā*). *Tanbīh*, Mazyadī ed., V, pp. 309–311.

⁴⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 309–311.

⁴⁹ For a close examination of Ibn ‘Arabī’s attitude toward 18 major Sufi figures and their influence on his teachings in the *Futūbāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-bikam*, see Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*. This study contributes to our understanding of the doctrinal and practical influences that individual Sufi figures had on Ibn ‘Arabī. It does not seek to analyze Neoplatonic and Brethren influences on his works, nor the

attained the breadth and depth of the Islamic ideals of submission (*islām*), faith (*īmān*), and perfection (*iḥsān*) as *muḥaqqiqūn*, “verifiers” who realize the truth-claims of religion.⁵⁰ Moreover, the term *Tahqīq*, “verification,” which becomes a key term in philosophical Sufism beginning in the seventh/thirteenth century, is practically synonymous with “*i'tibār*,” which is the ideal of the Mu'tabirūn.

Was Renunciation a Precursor of Sufism?

Another problem that besets the study of formative Andalusī mysticism is that modern scholarship on Islamic mysticism in general, and Andalusī mysticism in particular, frequently postulates a transition from an early, praxis-oriented renunciation (*zuhd*) to a full-fledged, institutionalized, and theoretically sophisticated Sufi tradition in the Muslim West around the mid- to late sixth/twelfth century. Scholars who work within this developmental framework of religious history dub lesser-studied figures like Ibn Barraḡān and Ibn Qasī as pioneers of an early “proto-Sufi” or “pre-*ṭarīqa*” movement. They point out correctly that the sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī mystical tradition was institutionally informal and incipient in comparison with the eastern and central lands of Islam. Although renunciant lodges were erected already by the fourth/tenth century, Andalusī renunciants and mystics usually lacked political patronage, did not generate a sizeable biographical tradition, and tended to follow the spiritual instructions of numerous teachers simultaneously. *Ṣuḥba*, or spiritual discipleship had not yet become regulated as a formal practice within a Sufi institution (*ṭarīqa*) and the individual aspirant was free to select his or her own methodical practices on the basis of an assortment of instructions given by different masters.

In the words of Addas, the quest for the divine in al-Andalus was “free and flexible.”⁵¹ This freedom and flexibility is apparent in the ebb and flow of Ibn Barraḡān's students from one teacher to another and in his loosely structured and relatively open audiences of spiritual instruction. Sufism in the Muslim East, by contrast, was already more formalized and integrated into the mainstream of Islamic thought. Mainstream *madrasa* curricula featured Sufi treatises, and the acclaimed writings of such figures

typological distinctions that Ibn al-'Arabī draws (or presupposes) between Sufism, mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*), esotericism (*bāṭiniyya*), and the like.

⁵⁰ Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p. 177. ⁵¹ Addas, *Quest*, p. 68.

as Makkī and Qushayrī had distilled certain esoteric elements from Sufi discourse with a view to introducing the science of Sufism to the mainstream. Sufis witnessed a gradual structuring and proliferation of dervish lodges (*khānaqāhs*) that were devoted to the fostering of communal spiritual life under a single master. Their major doctrinal and hagiographical works had already been compiled, and they enjoyed political sponsorship by viziers such as the Seljuk grand vizier Nizām al-Mulk.

This neat developmental outlook was already expressed in the writings of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), and portrays Andalusī mystics as primitive forerunners of a more institutionally and doctrinally developed *ṭarīqa* Sufism, which journeyed westward from the central and eastern lands of Islam to the Iberian Peninsula. This east-to-west historiographical framework, with its use of labels such as “proto-Sufism,” is an anachronistic misrepresentation of the formative sixth/twelfth century, and belies a far more complex picture of Andalusī intellectual history. First, Ibn Barraġān’s mystical approach does not represent some intermediate stage of development from renunciation to full-blown Sufism. In the case of al-Andalus, the latter did not grow out of the former. Both coexisted and developed as parallel traditions from the early beginnings of Andalusī religious history, as evidenced by the abiding influence of the fourth–fifth-/ninth–tenth-century writings of Ibn Masarra. At times, these two tendencies overlapped, interwove, or opposed one another. Both renunciation and mysticism, moreover, encompassed a spectrum of tendencies within themselves, produced their own body of writings, forged unique relationships to the state and society, and espoused distinctive ethical and behavioral norms.⁵²

Second, Ibn Barraġān was a mystic with renunciant leanings, and *spoke of himself* as belonging to a home-grown, and largely independent, parallel mystical tradition in al-Andalus. This tradition harks back to the writings of Ibn Masarra and was a self-consciously distinctive movement. Although it was called “the school of Ibn Masarra” by Asín Palacios, and was known in various Arabic medieval sources as the *Masarriyya*, proponents of this mystical tradition, including Ibn Masarra himself, preferred to call themselves *Mu‘tabirūn*, the Contemplatives (lit. “those who practice *i‘tibār*”). Asín Palacios’ assessment of the extent of Ibn Masarra’s influence has been called into question by many subsequent scholars. For it is difficult to trace a direct line of influence from his writings to later figures, since Masarran followers went underground for the good part of

⁵² Sviri, “Sufism: Reconsidering terms,” pp. 32–34.

two centuries and many of their texts were lost. Most importantly, Ibn Barraĵān, the most prominent representative of this tradition, has hardly received scholarly attention.

Ibn Barraĵān considered himself to be among “The Folk who Ponder the World of Dominion” (*ahl al-‘ibra/al-naẓar fī ‘ālam al-malakūt*)⁵³ and promoted Ibn Masarra’s key teachings. As a Mu‘tabir, he also derived his mystical knowledge (*ma‘rifa*) from an eclectic range of esoteric sources, pondered God’s signs in the cosmos incessantly, and sought to apprehend otherworldly realities by means of their embodiment in “The Reality Upon Which Creation Was Created” (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*). For him, as for Ibn Masarra, the supreme patron of the Mu‘tabirūn (*sayyid al-mu‘tabirīn*) was none other than the Prophet Abraham, who was *shown the kingdom of the heavens and earth, that he might be of those having certainty*. Then upon witnessing the setting of a star, the moon, and the sun, he turned *his face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth* (Q. 6:75–79).⁵⁴

It is clear from a close reading of Ibn Barraĵān’s works that he considered himself to be a follower of a full-fledged “school” or mystical approach, the Mu‘tabirūn. His claim is verified by the fact that the Mu‘tabirūn had a shared vocabulary and epistemology, an ‘ibra-centered worldview, and an abiding influence in al-Andalus. The Mu‘tabirūn self-consciously set themselves apart from mainstream Andalusī religious discourse. They distanced themselves physically from the large cities of al-Andalus where the central authorities and judges had most influence. They preferred to live in remote villages closer to the natural signs of God where they taught and practiced. The Mu‘tabirūn read broadly, devoted themselves to the study of Ḥadīth and Qur’ānic sciences, and had a predilection for esoteric subjects over hyperspecialization in legal subjects. They did not fully commit to Mālikism or Ash‘arism, seeking alternative religious paradigms and bodies of knowledge. The differences between the Mu‘tabirūn and mainstream Mālikī discourse grew more pronounced

⁵³ Terms like *mu‘tabir*, or *ahl al-‘ibra fī al-samāwāt wa-l-ard*, appear most often in the *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 181, 264, 302, 326, 399, 402 (no references to *mu‘tabir* in II). See also *Īdāb*: ¶762, 833. For examples of the term ‘*ibra* in the *Īdāb*, ¶1, 6, 8, 604, 743, 1144.

⁵⁴ In light of this understanding, Ibn Khaldūn astutely notes that Ibn Barraĵān belonged among the folk of divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*), i.e., in contrast to the “monists” for whom God is the sole Reality and the sum of the manifested and nonmanifested world. Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā’ al-sā’il*, pp. 51–52.

with persecution of the Mu‘tabirūn and the politicization of mystical epistemology.

Ibn Barraġān’s writings betray a rich inherited Mu‘tabirūn tradition already honed and elaborated in al-Andalus. He devoted his career, teachings, and writings to systematizing and recording its teachings. He must have had access to a textual body of works that are either lost or unknown, as well as a living oral tradition. His writings stand as testimony to the survival and power of Ibn Masarra’s intellectual legacy in al-Andalus, which became wed to broader bodies of knowledge that were available to the sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī scholarly tradition. That Ibn Masarra’s teachings on *i‘tibār* and the importance of natural symbolism were preserved as a living and vibrant tradition in both the cities and the countryside around Cordoba and beyond is evidenced by various scattered reports. For instance, one finds mention of Ibn Masarra’s followers “polemicizing frequently over signs of God” (*aktharū al-jidāl fī āyāt Allāh*) in the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh century, and interpreting Ḥadīth literature esoterically in support of their teachings (*ḥarrafū al-ta‘awwul fī ḥadīth rasūl Allāh*).⁵⁵ Unfortunately, biographers saw these “polemical” figures as too minor to be named. But as Asín Palacios, Corbin, and Arnaldez maintained, without being able to conclusively demonstrate, these silenced figures represented the continuation of Ibn Masarra’s tradition and provided the main thrust for Ibn Barraġān’s teachings.⁵⁶ The Mu‘tabirūn, including Ibn Barraġān, held that signs of God in nature are windows into the otherworld that are ontologically rooted in the hereafter, and saw the Ḥadīth corpus as a treasury of wisdom that bolstered their teachings. Ibn Barraġān’s continuous preoccupation with the concept of *i‘tibār*, as well as his endless discussions of the signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) as bolstered by Ḥadīth and his retreat into the western backlands of Seville to ponder nature, are all hallmarks of a living esoteric tradition. Moreover, the fact that Ibn Barraġān employed technical terminology and presumed his audience’s familiarity with these terms bespeaks of an audience and a readership that is familiar with these teachings in oral and written form.

Another indication of the continuation of Mu‘tabirūn teachings in the writings of Ibn Barraġān through the intermediacy of fifth-/eleventh-century followers of Ibn Masarra are the overlapping teachings of Ibn

⁵⁵ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism,” pp. 180–182.

⁵⁶ Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie Islamique*, p. 311; Palacios, *Obras escogidas*, I, p. 144. They mistakenly give precedence to Ibn al-‘Arif over Ibn Barraġān.

Barrajān and Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī (d. ca. 432/1040).⁵⁷ The latter, according to Ibn Ḥazm, was involved in predicting future events – much like Ibn Barrajān in the *Tanbīh al-afhām* (see Chapter 8).⁵⁸ Moreover, Ibn Barrajān's unique stance on the permissibility of temporary marriage (*nikāḥ al-mut'a*, lit. “marriage of pleasure”) was shared by Ru'aynī. What is interesting is that the reasoning that underpins the permissibility of *mut'a* in Ibn Barrajān's writings is not juridical but cosmological. Rather than arguing for or against the authenticity or legal binding-ness of relevant Qur'ānic verses and aḥādīth, Ibn Barrajān made a case for *mut'a* by citing the doctrine of the structural coherence (*naẓm*) of the Qur'ān, which is explored in Chapter 6. As a perfect text in both form and content, a text which cosmologically takes its reality from the Universal Servant (*al-'abd al-kullī*) that stands as intermediate between God and creation, Ibn Barrajān rejects the traditional Sunnī doctrine of abrogation, *naskh*, wherein certain conflicting verses of the Qur'ān contradict and abrogate one another (*naskh*). Ibn Barrajān affirms the doctrine of *mut'a*, *contra* virtually the entire later Sunnī legal tradition, and even by Fātimī Ismā'īlī jurists, on the grounds that no adjacent Qur'ānic verse contradicts it.⁵⁹ The fact that the only other figure linked to this doctrine in al-Andalus was Ibn Masarra's follower Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī suggests a shared worldview and a unique scholarly epistemology. It speaks of the continuation, propagation, and elaboration, whether orally or textually, of the cosmological teachings of the Mu'tabirūn. It is tenable that Ibn Barrajān studied under disciples of Ru'aynī, or the popular Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037), but unfortunately these contacts are not recorded in the sources.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fī al-mīlāl*, V, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism,” p. 182. In the fifth/eleventh century a number of Andalusī astrologers made future predictions, like Ibn al-Khayyāt (d. 447/1055), 'Ubayd Allāh b. Khalaf al-Istijjī, Abū al-Futūḥ Thābit b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 431/1040) who was put to death on account of one of them. These astrologists and their students, of which we know very little, presumably provided Ibn Barrajān with training in astrology or were instrumental in shaping his worldview (Fierro, “La religi6n,” p. 442).

⁵⁹ See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 34–38. Al-Qādī al-Nu'mān spoke against this doctrine. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 171. Only Twelver Shī'īs permit *mut'a*, and their juridical reasoning is completely different from Ibn Barrajān's doctrinal approach.

⁶⁰ As mentioned in Chapter I, Ibn Ḥazm maintains that Ru'aynī professed two epistemologically problematic Masarrī doctrines. The first is the acquisition of prophecy (*iktisāb al-mubuwwa*), and the second is the belief that the Throne ('*arsh*) governs the world since God in Himself is too sublimely transcendent to have any contact with His creation (*al-Faṣl fī al-mīlāl*, IV, p. 199).

The Mu‘tabirūn grew out of the particular sociopolitical circumstances of al-Andalus that were shaped by the state-jurist entente, and sought alternative modes of religious learning. Their distinctive intellectual worldview was molded by the study of the Qur‘ān and its derivative sciences, the broader Sunnī Ḥadīth corpus, the writings of Ibn Masarra, and Muslim Neoplatonist sources including the Brethren, and an indirect presence of Fāṭimī Ismā‘īlism. They also certainly drew upon sources from the Eastern Arabic Sufi tradition, with which they sympathized but never fully self-identified. The Granadan polymath Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374) alludes to the strong influence of Brethren and Ismā‘īlī writings in this intellectual milieu by stating that Western Andalusī mystics at this time read “Šūfi books as well as compositions by the esoterists (*bāṭiniyya*, i.e., the Ismā‘īlīs); *they were addicted to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and the like.*”⁶¹ Moreover, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) seems to affirm the existence of an esoterist (*bāṭimī*) undercurrent among Muslims when he attributes Ismā‘īlism to an Almerían named Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭulayṭulī (d. 455/1063), alias Ibn Shaqq al-Layl.⁶²

Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s claims to esoteric undercurrents in al-Andalus are confirmed by a close reading of Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn Qasī, who consciously did not disclose their sources. They took inspiration from Neoplatonizing works of the Brethren and Faṭimī Ismā‘īlī authors (probably through indirect means) such as the philosophical-theologian Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī (d. ca. 361/971), and the Fāṭimī preacher (*dā‘ī*) Ḥāmid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. ca. 411/1020–1), whose “Comfort of the Intellect” (*Rāḥat al-‘aql*) stands as a *summa* of Ismā‘īlī teachings. The treatises of the Brethren of Purity, which were likely introduced in al-Andalus as early as the fourth/tenth century,⁶³ inspired mystics not only among Andalusī Muslims but also Jews, such as Ibn Gabirol.⁶⁴ Ibn Qasī, and possibly even Ibn Barraĵān, may have had secret teachers who were familiar with Ismā‘īlī doctrines. Their concealment with regard to sources fits them into the pattern of dissimulation and secrecy (*taqiyya* and *kitmān*) among Ismā‘īlī authors.⁶⁵ Moreover, their interest in medicine and

⁶¹ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *A‘māl al-a‘lām*, p. 249 (cf. Ebstein, “Was Ibn Qasī a Šūfi?” n. 134). Ebstein’s translation.

⁶² Fierro, “La religión,” p. 436.

⁶³ Fierro, “Bāṭinism in al-Andalus”. According to Callatay, the treatises of the Brethren may have been introduced to Ibn Masarra already in the third/ninth century. (See “Philosophy and Bāṭinism in al-Andalus.”)

⁶⁴ Fierro, “La religión,” p. 436. See also Urvoy, *Penser d’Al-Andalus*, pp. 164–65.

⁶⁵ See Ebstein, “Secrecy in Ismā‘īlī Tradition.”

knowledge of philosophy, as well as their binary mode of thinking betrays a familiarity with the Ismā'īlī curriculum. It is quite likely that they both deliberately coined a unique set of terms and avoided Neoplatonic/Ismā'īlī terminological markers such as "The Universal Intellect" (*al-'aql al-kullī*) in order to avoid sectarian associations.

Despite the secrecy that may have taken place, it must be stressed that it would be an error to identify Ibn Barraĵān or Ibn Qasī as *committed* members (intellectually and especially politically) or secret followers of Ismā'īlism or the Brethren. While Ibn Qasī was more explicit in his Ismā'īlī leanings, both were selective readers of the Brethren and Ismā'īlī works and focused on certain teachings over others. Ibn Barraĵān saw a clear complementarity between these esoteric cosmological teachings and a literal reading of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and shows no signs of having read Ismā'īlī sources *qua* Ismā'īlism. If he had direct exposure to Ismā'īlī texts, he would have read them as repositories of wisdom (*ḥikma*) and mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) more generally, and not as Ismā'īlī writings per se.

To be clear, Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn Qasī were not "pseudo" or "proto-Ismā'īlī." Fāṭimī-Ismā'īlī ideas were in circulation in al-Andalus during their time. These ideas, like others influenced their synthetic worldview but did not win their not full commitment. Ibn Barraĵān, for instance, shows little interest in Pythagorean number speculations. As discussed in Chapter 8, he had a distinct understanding of the cycles of time and the significance of the number 6; he did not hesitate to oppose their claims in his writings. Ibn Barraĵān adamantly proclaims that mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) can in no way trump the legal injunctions of the divine law, and he clearly expresses his disapproval of esoterist tendencies toward the Sharī'a. To his eyes, mystical knowledge illuminates and complements juridical and exoteric knowledge (*'ilm*). Ibn Barraĵān vociferously accused Ismā'īlīs, philosophers, radical Sufis, and Masarrīs who claimed to acquire prophecy (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*) of falling into heresy and rupturing the balance between these two complementary and indispensable categories of religion. The crossing into the unseen (*'ibra*) is only effective when guided by the light of revelation:⁶⁶

Know that whoever lays claim to mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) but then violates the Messenger's revelation by refuting him, and [by claiming to be] unneeding of

⁶⁶ The *bāṭiniyya* and especially *falāsifa* are commonly mentioned by name as collective groups in such discussions, whereas radical Sufis are implied in various passages.

him (*istaghna* ‘*anhu*) is an enemy of God and a heretic (*zindīq*) . . . [for heresy] is to adamantly trump God’s rulings and of His Messenger. He might say: I seek aid in God beyond the Book and the Messenger. He might say: exoteric knowledge (‘*ilm*) is nullified by mystical knowledge (*ma’rifa*); and mystical knowledge invalidates legal rulings . . . all of this is heresy.⁶⁷

Later, he eloquently states, “This is like someone who says: I am independent by God from God (*istaghnaytu bi-Llāh ‘an ‘Llāh*).”⁶⁸

Ibn Qasī may be considered an outgrowth of the Mu‘tabirūn tradition. He expressed his mysticism in a deliberately allusive language as well, but his treatise *Khal‘ al-na‘layn* betrays much more explicit Fāṭimī-Ismā‘īlī and Brethren leanings. That is, Ibn Barraġān is more moderate in his esotericism than Ibn Qasī, who exhibits pronounced Neoplatonized cosmology and Ismā‘īlī and Messianic leanings in his work.⁶⁹ Ibn Qasī was probably more immersed in Ismā‘īlī writings than Ibn Barraġān, whereas Ibn al-‘Arīf, a late convert to mysticism, was probably the least versed in Ismā‘īlī writings and the most closely aligned with classical Sufi works of ethics, states, and stations of the soul. Still, we are told by one of his biographers that Ibn al-‘Arīf, Ibn Barraġān, and the Granadan Zāhirī Abū Bakr al-Mayūrḳī⁷⁰ who appeared for trial before the al-Murābiṭūn emir in Marrakesh, “professed the same doctrine.”⁷¹ Ibn al-‘Arīf compares himself to Ibn Barraġān, whom he calls “my senior Mu‘tabir” (*mutaqaddimī mu‘tabiran*).⁷² His association with Ibn Barraġān, his distance from Ghazālī, and the fact that biographers claim that both “professed the same doctrines,” seems to suggest a similar doctrinal orientation.

That said, it is important not to overemphasize the group distinctiveness of the Mu‘tabirūn vis-à-vis renunciation and classical Eastern Sufism; or Andalusī versus North African mysticism; nor to turn the Brethren into a silver bullet. Ibn Barraġān did not consider the Mu‘tabirūn to be an exclusive sect with hegemony over the spiritual dimension of Islam. Notwithstanding fundamental differences in approach, Ibn Barraġān saw himself as sharing a number of spiritual aspirations with Eastern classical Sufism. Moreover, by the first half of the sixth/twelfth century, a sense of group identity and solidarity

⁶⁷ *Sharb*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 190. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, II, p. 126.

⁶⁹ The parallels between Ibn Qasī’s thought and Ismā‘īlī/Brethren writings have been pointed out by Ebstein in “Was Ibn Qasī a Sūfī?”

⁷⁰ See Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu‘ġam*, p. 139, nr. 123; idem, *Takmila*, I, p. 359, nr. 1279; Murrākushī, *al-Dhayl*, VI, pp. 169–170, nr. 452; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa*, III, p. 190.

⁷¹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu‘ġam*, p. 19, nr. 14; Addas trans. Cf. *Quest*, p. 52.

⁷² Ibn al-‘Arīf, *Miftāḥ al-sa‘āda*, p. 109.

coalesced transregionally among mystics on both sides of the Straits. This sense of common bond is affirmed by two illustrative incidents that involved Ibn Barraĵān. The first is a biographical anecdote concerning the enigmatic Sijilmāssan *malāmatī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Daqqāq (d. end of sixth/twelfth or early seventh/thirteenth century) who frequented scholarly circles in Fez and was one of Abū Madyan's teachers. He was a miracle worker who publicly proclaimed himself as a friend of God (*walī*) and professed doctrines that raised the juridical feathers of many 'ulamā'. Reportedly, some of Daqqāq's companions were troubled by the accusations leveled against their master, and turned to Ibn Barraĵān and Ibn al-'Arīf for advice. Both Andalusīs responded in agreement: "do not criticize anything concerning his states" (*lā tunkirū shay' min aḥwālihi*).⁷³ The fact that the two foremost mystics of al-Andalus were consulted by followers of the North African Daqqāq, and that the latter showed support for a fellow mystic in the face of criticisms by Moroccan 'ulamā', confirms the existence of a group solidarity among mystics across the al-Murābiṭūn empire in opposition to the jurists and the regime.

The second anecdote involves another of Abū Madyan's teachers, Ibn Ḥirzihim, who displayed a show of camaraderie for his fellow Andalusī mystic. As we shall see in Chapter 3, when the emir 'Alī b. Yūsuf in Marrakesh and his jurists decreed that Ibn Barraĵān be deprived of burial rites following his trial and incarceration in 536/1141, Ibn Ḥirzihim mobilized the citizens of Marrakesh and orchestrated a massive funeral in honor of the deceased Sevillian saint. The fact that a North African mystic confronted the emir and his jurists in order to ensure that the status and dignity of a fellow Andalusī mystic was upheld, and that Ibn Ḥirzihim was able to provoke a massive impromptu funeral ceremony for Ibn Barraĵān, speaks volumes for mystics' popularity as well as their Andalusī-Maghribī sense of commonality in the face of opposing political and religious forces within the al-Murābiṭūn system.

Also, the demarcation between subjective, ethically oriented "Eastern Sufism" and philosophical "Andalusī mysticism" must not be pushed too far. The lines of differentiation between Eastern Arabic Sufism and the Mu'tabirūn tradition are far from clear, and it is rather a question of typology and emphasis. As an interpretive framework, this division is helpful but also has severe limitations. First, the Sufi influence of figures like Abū Sa'īd al-A'rābī (d. 341/952) and his circle of renunciants in

⁷³ Tādīlī, *Tashawwuf*, pp. 156–157, nr. 41.

Mecca on Andalusī is evident. His teachings journeyed from the East, reaching Spain via North Africa with the return of pilgrims and seekers of knowledge.

Second, the Mu‘tabirūn were absorbed too quickly into the Sufi hagiographical tradition to have developed a fully crystallized group identity. They had no biographical compilations, developed little institutions, and had little by way of formalized ritual practices. Ibn Barraġān himself did not identify his mystical approach within the geographic parameters of al-Andalus. He had no hesitation in recognizing Eastern figures, such as Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, as highly accomplished Mu‘tabirūn in their own right.⁷⁴ Ibn Barraġān was influenced in his treatment of the letters by Tustarī (or at least a pseudo-Tustarī treatise).⁷⁵ Also, the universal Prophetic figure of Abraham, who embodied the supreme prototype of the Mu‘tabir, arriving at knowledge of divine unity by contemplating the heavens, was obviously no Andalusī. Moreover, this East-West demarcation becomes even more problematic because seventh-/thirteenth-century figures like Ibn ‘Arabī incorporated teachings of the Mu‘tabirūn, among other bodies of knowledge, including late Ash‘arī philosophical-theology, into their rubric. A cursory read through Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* plainly demonstrates that he incorporated vast fields of learning into his worldview. In this regard, speaking of the one-way transfer of Andalusī mystical doctrine to the East in the seventh/thirteenth century onward is too simplistic.

Third, the works of a score of sixth-/twelfth-century Persian Sufis prior to Ibn ‘Arabī, including sixth-/twelfth-century Persian authors like ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Ḥamadānī, Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, and Ismā‘īl al-Sam‘ānī, further complicates this claim. These authors articulated a language of theoretical mysticism in Persian and Arabic against the backdrop of a well-developed cosmology, and (unlike the Mu‘tabirūn) were in close conversation with the works of Avicenna.⁷⁶ Ibn Barraġān was unaware of these Persian developments, but would have rejoiced to learn that a whole world of mystical thought was beginning to emerge both East and West at the dawn of the sixth/twelfth century.

⁷⁴ Ibn Barraġān cites Biṣṭāmī without naming him in *Sharḥ*, I, p. 400. He describes him as a fully realized Mu‘tabir following a discussion of Abraham, the Master of the Mu‘tabirūn.

⁷⁵ Stroumsa, Svirī, and Ebstein are skeptical about the historicity of Tustarī’s treatise on the letters circulating among Andalusī mystics, and claim that they were developed within Ismā‘īlī and Hermetist circles.

⁷⁶ Correspondence with Mohammed Rustom, April 2014.

III THE ONSET OF INSTITUTIONAL SUFISM
IN THE MAGHRIB AND AL-ANDALUS

Ibn Tūmart

The collapse of the al-Murābiṭūn marks the end of the formative period of Andalusī mysticism, the fading of the Mu‘tabirūn as a movement, and a transition to full-blown institutionalized transregional Sufism. The al-Muwaḥḥidūn overthrew the al-Murābiṭūn in 539/1145 and succeeded creating a politically unified empire stretching across the Muslim West, including present-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, part of Libya, and al-Andalus. Muḥammad b. Tūmart (d. 524/1130), a Maṣmūda Berber from the Sūs region in southern Morocco, was the religiopolitical ideologue and state founder of the al-Muwaḥḥidūn. A politician at root, he made use of Ash‘arism, elements of philosophy (*falsafa*), Mu‘tazilī, Shī‘ī, and Zāhiri doctrine in his struggle for power.⁷⁷ The very title of his movement, “Proclaimers of Divine Unity” (*muwaḥḥidūn*) is self-serving and polemical because it pairs itself against the allegedly deviant anthropomorphism of the al-Murābiṭūn. Ibn Tūmart received training in theology and other sciences with prominent Eastern scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Shāshī (d. 507/1114), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṣayrafi (d. 500/1107), Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, and Kiyā’ al-Harrāsī (Juwaynī’s student) at the Nizāmiyya of Baghdād. He returned to the Muslim West around 511/1117. His claims to have studied with Ghazālī are dubious, since the latter had already left his post in the Nizāmiyya for Khurāsān by the time of Ibn Tūmart’s arrival.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, it is true that Ghazālī exerted a profound influence on Ibn Tūmart’s moral, juridical, and theological teachings.⁷⁹

Ibn Tūmart’s political career began in Tunis after 510/1116 where he gathered a circle of followers and instructed them in the rigorous religious practices set forth in the *Iḥyā’*. He reached Marrakesh in 515/1121 with a loyal group of followers belonging to different North African tribes. It was under the leadership of his skillful successor ‘Abd al-Mu‘min b. ‘Alī (d. 558/1163), however, that the al-Muwaḥḥidūn conquered North Africa and al-Andalus.⁸⁰ Most of Ibn Tūmart’s works, including two straightforward, predominantly Ash‘arī abridgements entitled *al-Murshida* (The Guidebook), have reached us through ‘Abd al-Mu‘min. These two short

⁷⁷ Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur*, pp. 111–124.

⁷⁸ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 77.

⁷⁹ Fletcher, “Ibn Tūmart’s Teachers.”

⁸⁰ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 78.

Murshidas are contained in the compilation of Ibn Tūmart's writings that were edited two decades after his death, serving as entry-level texts (*mad-khal*) for students of theology in the Maghrib under 'Abd al-Mu'min.⁸¹ The *Murshidas* were well received, frequently commented upon, and put to verse by scholars of the Maghrib, al-Andalus, Ifrīqiyyā, and the Sūdān. They played a significant role in uniting the Maghrib under Ash'arism and positioning the science of *kalām*, not *fiqh*, as the queen of the Islamic sciences.

The early al-Muwaḥḥidūn ruthlessly imposed the staunchly anti-anthropomorphist creed of Ibn Tūmart on all subjects within their dominion. By pitting themselves against the putatively crude, anthropomorphist, insular, traditional al-Murābiṭūn who were fixated on the branches (*furū'*) of jurisprudence rather than its foundations (*uṣūl*), they claimed a middle-course between the literalist anthropomorphism of the al-Murābiṭūn and the abstracting rationalism of the Mu'tazila. The campaign was spearheaded by a government-sponsored Ash'arī elite, represented by figures such as Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Ḍarīr and Abū 'Amr al-Salālījī (d. 574/1178).⁸² Reacting against the al-Murābiṭūn ban on teaching Ash'arism to the masses, the al-Muwaḥḥidūn led an Ash'arī "mass-media" campaign, imposing the creed of Ibn Tūmart upon not only common Muslims but also Christians and Jews through forced conversion, and preaching Ash'arism to non-Arabized rural Berbers through tracts in their mother-tongue.⁸³ It is noteworthy, however, that relatively

⁸¹ For an overview of Ibn Tūmart's works and religious ideology, see Fierro, "The religious policy of the Almohads."

⁸² Abū 'Amr al-Salālījī (d. 574/1178) of Fez has sometimes been referred to as the "Juwaynī of the Maghrib" on account of his profound mastery of theology and his role in disseminating Ash'arism throughout North Africa during the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period. One historian went as far as to say that "it is he who saved the people of Fez from anthropomorphism," that is, traditional al-Murābiṭūn doctrine (Ibn al-Aḥmar, *Buyūtāt Fās*, p. 49, cf. Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur*, pp. 139–146). His popular didactic poem, entitled *al-'Aqīda al-burbāniyya fī 'ilm al-ulūhiyya* is his only surviving work, which he claimed to have written in response to the request of an elderly Andalusī woman who wanted Ash'arism explained to her in a simple and easily retainable manner. He is said to have studied Juwaynī's *Irsbād* with 'Alī b. Ḥirzihim and subsequently modeled the *Burbāniyya* after it. The *Burbāniyya* received numerous commentaries of varying lengths over the centuries, and was taught in the mosque-universities of the Muslim West. The *Burbāniyya* was arguably the most popular text of its kind in the Maghrib, surpassing even Ibn Tūmart's *Murshida* (Tādīlī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 198). It eventually declined in prominence with the revitalization Ash'arism in the ninth/fifteenth century at the hands of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1489).

⁸³ The enforcement of Ash'arism on the masses during the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period gave rise to popular misunderstandings, which manifested ironically in very un-Ash'arī proverbs, such as "God decreed but was not pleased" (*qaḍā Allāh wa-lam yarḍa*) or "Oh He who sees but is not seen" (*yā man yarā wa-lā yurā*). Thus the troubled Abū Ishāq b. Dihāq b. al-Mar'a

few Mālikī scholars who were formerly allied with the al-Murābiṭūn were dismissed from their appointments on ideological grounds in the first twenty years of transition to al-Muwaḥḥidūn rule.⁸⁴ The imposition of Ash‘arism on the masses even had its opponents among the ideological sympathizers of the al-Murābiṭūn such as Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, Ibn Ḥamdīn, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Attāb. But the old al-Murābiṭūn voices of opposition died out before too long, and a new consensus of scholars emerged. The diehard anti-anthropomorphism and Messianic (Mahdist) proclamations of the early al-Muwaḥḥidūn, moreover, evolved over the decades with changing political circumstances. Most notably, the al-Muwaḥḥidūn became increasingly accommodating of philosophical discourse – as evidenced by the fact that Averroes (d. 595/1198) and Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) were both employed in the al-Muwaḥḥidūn court – thus breathing new life into the philosophical and mystical traditions of al-Andalus and North Africa.⁸⁵

Abū Madyan: “The Junayd of the West”

Just as Ibn Masarra initiated the Mu‘tabirūn tradition in al-Andalus, the illustrious Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb (d. 594/1197), who espoused a “sober” law-compliant Sufism, marks the genesis of a self-conscious Sufi tradition in the Muslim West. The rise of his *ṭarīqa* movement and a local Sufi biographical tradition during the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period entailed the absorption of the Mu‘tabirūn into the broader Sunnī Sufi tradition. Abū Madyan preached sobriety and strict conformity to the *sharī‘a*, and earned the title “Junayd of the West.” He sat in Fez at the feet of the illiterate but enormously influential Berber saint and heir to the Nūriyya tradition Abū Ya‘zā al-Hazmīrī, the enigmatic *malāmatī* Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Daqqāq, and the noted scholar ‘Alī b. Ḥirzihim who taught him the works of Muḥāsibī, Qushayrī, and Ghazālī.⁸⁶ He studied the works of

composed works to rectify such popular errors. (Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Jadhwat al-iqtibās*, I, p. 90.) Moreover, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī, and his son Ibn Muḥammad al-Sakūnī (d. 717/1317) were active in this project. The father authored *Arba‘un mas‘ala fī uṣūl al-dīn*, and his son wrote the famous “Mistakes of Common Believers Concerning the Science of Kalām” (*Laḥn al-‘awāmm fī-mā yata‘allaq bi-‘ilm al-kalām*). Iḥnāna, *Tatawwur*, p. 154.

⁸⁴ Urvoy, “The ‘ulamā’ of al-Andalus,” p. 869.

⁸⁵ For an excellent and concise overview of Almohadism, its evolution, political ramifications, and an extensive bibliography, see Fierro, “The religious policy of the Almohads.”

⁸⁶ For an analysis of his importance and a compilation of his texts, see Cornell’s *The Way of Abū Madyan*. See also *EI*², “Abū Madyan,” (G. Marçais); and *EI*³, “Abū Madyan,” (D. Gril).

Ghazālī in the East as well, then returned to the coastal port of Bijāya in northern Algeria where he settled and taught. Several of Ibn Barrajān’s students, including Ibn al-Kharrāt (d. 581/1185) and Ibn Ghālib (d. 568/1172) (Chapter 3), were teachers of Abū Madyan, who may have exerted a profound intellectual impact upon him. He died in Tilimsān on the way to Marrakesh where he was summoned by the Mu’minid ruler Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr to appear in court. His surviving works include short creeds, poems, and maxims, although he is most remembered for his treatment of spiritual virtue, his no-nonsense renunciation (*zuhd*), subjecting the body to hunger, combating the ego, and most of all trust in God (*tawakkul*) in the form of pithy maxims.⁸⁷ In his aphorisms, he stressed spiritual praxis (*amal*) over metaphysical speculation. Abū Madyan’s synthesis and formal expression of the practical Sufi method of his day earned him the title of Pole (*quṭb*).

Although it is not possible to trace the origins of his teachings to specific teachers that taught him, a fairly clear spiritual method can be gleaned from his works as a whole.⁸⁸ His pithy metaphysical teachings are eloquently conveyed in his works in poetic form. He was critical of the behavior that characterized rural, lower-class Sufism such as the Ḥamdāsha, Jilala, and ‘Isāwa groups of Morocco. He held for instance that Sufi chanting (*samā’*) could be performed only in secluded and private settings. There is perhaps some connection to be made between Abū Madyan’s categorization of Sufis as the “Party of God” (*ḥizb Allāh*) and the politicized Maghribī *futuwwa* and *īthār* tradition (practice of giving preference to others over oneself) taught earlier by Ibn al-‘Arif and others, with its stress on social reformism. The al-Muwahhidūn *fuqahā’* of Bijāya saw themselves as the “Party of God” and as such would have perceived Abū Madyan’s characterization of Sufism with suspicion. Later, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) would adopt the notion of social activism implicit in Abū Madyan’s teaching, and redefine Sufism as not only an introverted process of spiritual purification but also one of active social reformism.⁸⁹ Thus Abū Madyan influenced later western Islamic Sufi masters such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī (d. 869/1465),⁹⁰ and has rightly been regarded as the spiritual

⁸⁷ EI², “Abū Madyan,” (G. Marçais). ⁸⁸ Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, pp. 27–28.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 33–34.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 15–16. See Danner’s overview of the rise of the Shādhiliyya in the Maghribī context, “The Shādhiliyya and North African Sufism”; R. Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale*, pp. 322–330; Maḥmūd, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya*.

forefather of the Shādhiliyya order.⁹¹ His influence on western Islamic mysticism is testified to by the fact that the most important regional Sufi groups (*tā'ifa*) in Morocco up to the late eighth/fourteenth century were followers of the doctrines of Abū Madyan, and nearly one-third of the Rīfian saints compiled by the hagiographer al-Bādisī were his students or those of his disciples.⁹² Abū Madyan thus marks the beginning of a self-consciously Sufi movement in the Muslim West.

Tādilī's Sufi Hagiography: *al-Tashawwuf*

The crystallization of Sufism was further achieved by the famous Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. al-Zayyāt, known as al-Tādilī. He was a *litterateur*, jurist, and hagiographer from the city of Tādila in Morocco. He served as judge in Regrāga and was buried in Marrakesh. Like the saints that he chronicled, Tādilī was himself celebrated for his profound piety. He was a companion of the notable Maghribī saint Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī (d. 601/1204), and most versions of "The Book of Insight into the [Lives of the] Champions of Sufism" (*K. al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*) include a highly cherished appendix on Sabtī. Tādilī memorialized the lives of the saints (sing. *ṣāliḥ*, *walī*) of Marrakesh and southern Morocco in 279 rich hagiographic entries. The saints he portrays are mostly of Berber stock, and stretch back to the early al-Murābiṭūn and into the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period; that is, from the formative fifth/eleventh to the seventh/thirteenth centuries. Of all early works of Maghribī Sufism, the *Tashawwuf* has had the most significant influence in defining the tendencies and ideals of Maghribī Sufism. The *Tashawwuf* drew upon the formal biographical *ṭabaqāt* works of the jurists and Ḥadīth experts. He related accounts about Sufis through chains of transmission (sing. *isnād*) linking Tādilī to the eyewitness testimonies of the saint in question, thus meeting the expectations of the 'ulamā' class. Moreover, Tādilī modeled his *Tashawwuf* on the Eastern hagiographies of the Buyid and Seljuq Sufis by Sulamī, Iṣfahānī, and Qushayrī. He included verbatim quotations from Qushayrī's *Risāla fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf* in his discussion of the methodological approach (*madhhab*) of Sufism.⁹³ In the wake of the *Tashawwuf*, other important sources for early Maghribī Sufism were penned, including *Al-Minhāj al-wāḍiḥ fī ṭaḥqīq karāmāt Abī Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ* of Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Mājirī, *Al-Maqṣad al-sharīf wa-l-manza'al-laṭīf fī al-ta'rīf*

⁹¹ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 239, 246.

⁹² Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 131–132. ⁹³ *Ibid.*

bi-ṣulaḥā' *al-Rīf* of Bādīsī (d. ca. 723/1322), and *Uns al-faqīr* of Ibn Qunfudh al-Quṣanṭīnī (d. 810/1407).⁹⁴

The *Tashawwuf* is an indispensable resource for the sociology of religion and burgeoning Sufism in the Muslim West. It brings to light social customs surrounding sainthood, renunciant practices, and social expectations that the medieval Moroccan saint was expected to meet. Through this work, one gains an appreciation for the evolution of sainthood, the master-disciple relationship, and the manifestations of Sufism in Maghribī society at large.⁹⁵ The *Tashawwuf* also played an important role in transforming the Maghribī friend of God (*walī Allāh*) into a cultural role-model who satisfied the spiritual and social needs of his community. Although the formal canonization of saints is foreign to Islamic history at large, Muslim hagiographers such as Tādilī played an important role in shaping the image of the holy man. Tādilī applied the category of saint to any pious Maghribī individual who lived up to the rigorous standards idealized by Tādilī. He sought to expose the piety of early saints rather than their doctrinal beliefs. Sincerity of faith and profound piety took precedence over metaphysics. For Tādilī, a friend of God was one who exemplified the behavioral model (*sunna*) of the Prophet and the spirit of the pious forefathers of Islam. A friend of God manifested socially oriented virtue (*ṣalāh*) to the community, and sincere servitude (*ibāda*) to God. It is not surprising therefore that renunciation emerges as a unifying practice between different types of scholars, including jurists and Sufis, in Tādilī's vision of Sufism. Maghribī sanctity was thus fashioned to fit the pan-Islamic mold of the virtuous saint (*ṣāliḥ*), and in the process, distinctive regional traits of this spiritual-social phenomenon were often forfeited.

Tādilī's listing of the evidentiary miracles of orthodox Mālikī jurists such as the al-Murābiṭūn founder 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn alongside those of Sufis expresses the complex relationship between the court, popular Sufism, Sufi epistemology, and learned Mālikī orthodoxy. By embracing all pietists, the *Tashawwuf* had a leveling impact upon Sufism in the Muslim West. It was instrumental in introducing Sufism into the mainstream of Maghribī orthodox Islam while safeguarding the place of the jurists in the realm of religious authority. It is no coincidence that Iṣfahānī also included non-Sufis in his hagiography in order to legitimize the Sufis he chronicled.⁹⁶ Combining multifarious functions as spiritual guides,

⁹⁴ EI², "Ibn al-Zayyāt," (A. Faure). ⁹⁵ Ferhat and Triki, "Hagiographie et religion."

⁹⁶ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 7.

social activists, orthodox jurists, charismatic healers, and dream interpreters, Tādilī's memorialized friends of God served as transmitters of the Prophetic tradition and were rewarded for their devotion by the performance of evidentiary miracles (*karāmāt*). The expectations of various strands of Maghribī society were fulfilled by these miracle workers.

To conclude, Abū Madyan's *ṭarīqa* and Tādilī's hagiography together mark the first openly and consciously "Sufi" expressions of the Muslim West, which made Sufism's recognition by mainstream Mālikī jurists possible. But the so-called late sixth–seventh-/twelfth–thirteenth-century "Sufi tradition" constructed by these authors did not coalesce into a cohesive monolithic movement. It comprised two distinct and parallel branches that hark back, in the case of al-Andalus, to the early third-/ninth-century Spanish Umayyad period. The first, which Cornell has dubbed "juridical Sufism," was a praxis-oriented, socially conscious, intensely devotional, and renunciatory quest for the divine embodied by the Sevillian renunciants, Ghazālīan-inspired renunciants, as well as later North Africans such as Abū Madyan, Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), Jazūlī (d. 869/1465) and Zarrūq (d. 898/1493). This tradition represents a continuation of the early Andalusī renunciants, enriched by an added layer of inspiration from the teachings of Ghazālī and the broader written corpus of Eastern Arabic Sufism.

The second branch, which is commonly referred to as "Philosophical Sufism," was a more intellectual and controversial expression of mysticism that developed parallel to the first and was subsumed under the generic category of "Sufism." It harks back to the Mu'tabirūn teachings of Ibn Masarra, which went underground periodically between the fourth-/tenth- to the fifth-/eleventh centuries, resurfaced with Ibn Barraĵān and his peers in the early sixth/twelfth century, and finally reached its pinnacle with the much more elaborate writings of Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Sab'īn (d. 668/1270), and Shushtarī (d. 667/1269), as well as North Africans like Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241). The latter represented a still broader synthesis and refined engagement with religious and intellectual disciplines and a deeper engagement with philosophy and philosophical theology. Ghazālī and the Eastern Arabic Sufi writings still played a comparatively minor role in their works. Ibn 'Arabī and his peers then migrated to the Eastern lands of Islam where their towering thought-system took on a life of its own. Later Eastern figures of Ibn 'Arabī's school would often look back to al-Andalus as the wellspring of divine wisdom.

The Life of a Contemplative

Ibn Barraĵān's Educational Formation, Spiritual Practices, Political Views, and Decease

INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters aimed at sketching the broad historical, socio-political, and religious developments in Andalusī history that culminated in the rise of the Mu'tabirūn tradition during the late al-Murābiṭūn period. We now turn to the figure who was at the forefront of the Mu'tabirūn, Abū al-Ḥakam 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Abī al-Rijāl Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Lakhmī al-Ishbīlī. Most secondary studies of Ibn Barraĵān's life and work¹ are based upon patchy and often conflicting data furnished by his biographers. Often overlooked are the precious shreds of historical contextual evidence embedded in Ibn Barraĵān's own writing, evidence that supplies us with a clearer understanding of his biography and political views. The present chapter addresses this lacuna in three sections. Section I covers Ibn Barraĵān's ancestral origins, family ties, educational formation in al-Andalus, and

¹ GAL I, 434; GAL S I, 775–776. The earliest study on Ibn Barraĵān is written in German by Goldziher, "Ibn Barraġān," *ZDMG*, pp. 544–546. See also *EI²*, "Ibn Barradjān," (A. Faure); the introductory study on Ibn Barraĵān in *Šarḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* by ed. P. de la Torre, pp. 33–36; Gharmīnī, *Al-Madāris al-šūfiyya*, pp. 114–154; Gril, "La 'lecture supérieure'"; idem, "L'interprétation par transposition symbolique"; Qārī, "Ibn Barraĵān wa-juhūdih fi al-tafsīr"; González Costa, "Un ejemplo de la hermeneutica sufi del corán"; idem, "Ibn Barraġān, Abū L-Ḥakam (Abuelo)"; Hosni, "Manhaj al-imām Ibn Barraĵān fi tafsīrihi"; Küçük, "Light upon light, Part I"; idem, "Light upon light, Part II"; Melvin-Koushki, "Ibn Barraĵān, seer of God's cycles"; Bellver, "Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus"; idem, "Ibn Barraġān and Ibn 'Arabī; Ibn Barraĵān, *A Qur'ān Commentary*, eds. Böwering and Casewit; Y. Casewit, "The forgotten mystic: Ibn Barraĵān"; idem, "A reconsideration of the life and works of Ibn Barraĵān"; idem, "A Muslim scholar of the Bible."

stance toward Mālikism and legal theory. Section II examines the students and disciples of Ibn Barraĵān, and the dissemination of his teachings to the circle of Abū Madyan. Section III evaluates Ibn Barraĵān's political views, millenarian expectations, incarceration in Marrakesh with Ibn al-'Arīf and Abū Bakr al-Mayūrḳī, and his demise.

I EARLY YEARS, EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

His *Nisba*, *Kunya*, *Ism*, *Laqab*

The life and work of Ibn Barraĵān receives notice in most of the major Arabic historical and biographical sources.² The earliest, to which all subsequent sources refer, was penned by Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260) in his biographical dictionary entitled "The Supplement to the Book *al-Ṣila* (The Appendix)" (*K. al-Takmila li-kitāb al-ṣila*). The latter was compiled as a supplement to Ibn Bashkuwāl's (d. 578/1183) earlier work which bears the title "The Appendix to the History of the Imāms and Scholars of al-Andalus" (*K. al-Ṣila fī ta'rīkh a'immat al-Andalus wa-'ulamā'ihim*).³ The second important entry on Ibn Barraĵān is found in Ibn al-Zubayr's (d. 708/1308) *Ṣilat al-ṣila* (Appendix to the Appendix) a work which in turn builds upon the first *Takmila* of Ibn al-Abbār. Together, Ibn al-Abbār and Ibn al-Zubayr provide most of the substantive biographical data on the Sevillan master. The later biographers add very little historical information.

Although the precise year of Ibn Barraĵān's date of birth is not specified by the biographers, a tentative date can be put forth with some certainty in order to establish a basic understanding of his life, students, teachers, and chronology of his works. The biographers do not mention that he attained

² Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, III, pp. 46–47, nr. 115; idem, *Mu'ğam*, pp. 19–20, nr. 139; Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, p. 31–33, nr. 45; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, IV, pp. 230, 236–37; VII, p. 340; VIII, p. 71; Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-jinān*, III, p. 204; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, 44, p. 72; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, IV, p. 13–14; Suyūtī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, p. 68; Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, I, p. 15; Baghdādī, *Hadiyat al-'arīfīn*, I, p. 570; Tādīlī, *Tashawwuf* (on Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Daqqāq), pp. 156–57, nr. 41; (on 'Alī b. Hīrzihim), pp. 168–173, nr. 51; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, V, p. 270; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhabab*, VI, pp. 185–1; Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya* II, 425, p. 682; Nabhānī, *Jāmi' Karāmāt*, I, p. 166–167; Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā' al-sā'il*, p. 51–52; Nāṣirī, *Istiqṣā*, II, pp. 76–77; Ibn al-Muwaqqit, *al-Sa'āda al-abadiyya*, I, p. 106; Ḥājji Khalīfah, *Kashf al-zumūn*, II, pp. 1031–1033; Kakhāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn*, II, p. 147, nr. 7226; Dāwudī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, I, 280, p. 300.

³ Ibn Bashkuwāl's *Ṣila* itself is a continuation of the biographical dictionary assembled by Ibn al-Faraḳī (d. 404/1013) entitled *Ta'rīkh 'ulamā' al-Andalus*.

longevity (*mu'ammār*), so it can be safely assumed, as per biographical convention, that he died before reaching the age of 90. This would place his birth sometime after 446/1051. As well, we know that he studied the entirety of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* under Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Manzūr (d. Shawwāl 469/May 1077).⁴ Ibn Barrajan would have been qualified for this undertaking in his late teens or early twenties, after having committed the Qur'ān to memory, acquired basic reading and writing skills, and mastered rudimentary Arabic grammar (*naḥw*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). It is very rare for a student to study a large primary Ḥadīth text like Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* before the teenage years.⁵ Presumably then, Ibn Barrajan was born *circa* 450/1058 in the late 'Abbādi period, under the rule of Abū 'Amr 'Abbād b. Muḥammad (r. 433/1042–460/1069), who took the honorific title al-Mu'taqid bi-Llāh (The Divinely Assisted). He witnessed the rise and decline of the al-Murābiṭūn in al-Andalus, and died in his mid-eighties in 536/1141 at Marrakesh during the late al-Murābiṭūn period.

The biographers note that 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Barrajan's paternal tribal designation or *nisba*, is al-Lakhmī, indicating that he was from the Arab tribe of Banū Lakhm (*al-Lakhmī*). The Banū Lakhm were a Yemenī Arab tribe of Qaḥṭān. In pre-Islamic days, they resided in the northeastern regions of the Arabian Peninsula, 'Irāq, and the Levant. The Lakhmī dynasty, which adopted Nestorian Christianity, was centered in its capital at al-Ḥira from *ca.* 300 CE to *ca.* 600 CE. The dynasty was a semi-autonomous political entity which acted as a buffer state, protecting the Sassānid Empire against Arab nomadic raids into the Fertile Crescent. With the rise of Islam, Lakhmīs were gradually absorbed into the Muslim Empire and subsequently lost their Nestorian Christian identity. Their name reemerged in al-Andalus during the Ṭā'ifa period when the fifth-/eleventh-century Arab Banū 'Abbād emirate of Seville claimed the Banū Lakhm as their genealogical ancestors. The Banū 'Abbād traced their lineage back to a Lakhmī immigrant from Arabia known as Ismā'il b. 'Abbād al-Lakhmī, who claimed to

⁴ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, III, pp. 803–804, nr. 1208; Ibn 'Amīra, *Bughyat al-multamis*, I, pp. 75–76, nr. 28; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XVIII, pp. 389–390, nr. 190. Ibn Manzūr and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) were masters of 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Arabī (d. 492/1099), father of the famous Mālikī scholar Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148). In addition, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī co-taught some of Ibn Barrajan's disciples.

⁵ Bulliet (*Islam*, p. 14) notes that boys between ages of 5 and 10 attended Ḥadīth sessions in sixth-/twelfth-century Nishapur. In Bulliet's "The Age Structure of Medieval Islamic Education," pp. 107–109, he states that Ḥadīth studies were typically completed when a student was in his mid-twenties. It is hardly imaginable that Ibn Manzūr would grant a teaching license in Ḥadīth for Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to a 10-year-old Ibn Barrajan.

be a descendant of the much-admired pre-Islamic Lakhmī Nestorian king al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir (d. 609 CE).⁶ Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād secured ‘Abbādī rule over Seville and its environs from 414/1013 onward. His emirate survived for seventy years and was toppled in 484/1091 by the overpowering al-Murābiṭūn army.

Ibn Barraḡān’s grandfather migrated with his family to Seville under the successor of the emirate of Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād, ‘Abbād b. Muḥammad II “al-Mu‘taḡid” (r. 434–461/1042–1069), only a few decades before the collapse of the *tā’ifa*. Their migration was prompted by the “civil strife of the Arabs” (*fitnat al-‘Arab*), the devastations caused by the Banū Hilāl invasions of Ifrīqiyā (modern-day Tunisia).⁷ The southern and eastern Andalusī *tā’ifas*, and in particular the emirate of Seville and Granada, provided safety for waves of northbound refugees from Ifrīqiyā, as well as southbound migrants from the beleaguered northern and northwestern regions. Seville was an attractive destination for these refugees. The city enjoyed a thriving agrarian economy that surpassed the maritime economies of the coastal cities. The Banū ‘Abbād nearly annexed the entire southwest of al-Andalus, beginning with Ḥammūdī territories of Algeciras, then Morón, Carmona, Ronda, and Arcos, and in 461/1069 even Cordoba.⁸ In addition, a considerable number of the immigrants who were drawn to Seville were scholars, and the city soon established itself as a major center of Islamic learning on the Peninsula.

Given the predominance of the Banū Lakhm in Seville over other tribes,⁹ it is likely that Ibn Barraḡān’s family already had preexisting tribal or family connections in the region and were able to settle there without difficulty. As first-generation, middle-class immigrants to an intellectually and economically flourishing city, they fared quite well economically and could afford to provide both Ibn Barraḡān and his brother with a local scholarly training. At the same time, the family was not particularly wealthy, since neither of the sons appear to have studied abroad. It is likely that the family had already been steeped in religious learning in

⁶ Zaynab, *al-Mawsū‘a al-‘amma*, II, p. 245.

⁷ Other emigrations incited by *fitnat al-‘Arab* are recorded by Ibn Bashkuwāl in the *Ṣila*. See I, p. 214, nr. 302; II, p. 589, nr. 876; III, p. 871, nrs. 1331–1332. Cf. Bellver, “Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 664, n. 21.

⁸ See Guichard and Soravia, *Les royaumes de Taifas* pp. 72–78 for more on the expansion of the ‘Abbādī *tā’ifa* in southern al-Andalus; and pp. 196–207 for an analysis of the armies of Seville, its composition, expansionism, power, and use of non-Arab mercenaries.

⁹ Urvoy, *Le monde de ulémas*, p. 53.

Ifriqiyā. Unfortunately, family records may have been lost in the Hilālī invasions, and Ibn Barraġān does not make any mention of these personal circumstances in his writings.

Ibn Barraġān is commonly referred to by his honorific designation (*kunya*) Abū al-Ḥakam in the medieval sources. The name *Ibn Barraġān* remains an etymological point of contention among scholars. The root B-R-JĀN has very little precedent in medieval Islamic texts, and again our author gives no explanations for its origin in his own writings. Suggestions put forth by medieval and modern scholars remain conjectural.¹⁰ Some tender that Barraġān is of Berber origin.¹¹ However, biographers like Dhahabī (d. 748/1347) Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), and Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) favor the idea that *Barraġān* is derived from *Abū al-Rijāl*.¹² This is supported by the fact that Ibn Barraġān is called “Ibn Abī al-Rijāl” by several of his biographers including ‘Asqalānī.¹³ Moreover, the family name Ibn Abī al-Rijāl may refer to a group of eminent scholars in Ifriqiyā, centered in Qayrawān, with close associations to the court. ‘Alī b. Abī al-Rijāl al-Shaybānī al-Maghribī al-Qayrawānī (d. ca. 454/1062), for instance, was an important astrologer who served in the court of emir al-Mu‘izz b. Bādīs in Tunis.¹⁴ “Barraġān” may thus be a Maghribī-Andalusī dialectical

¹⁰ Ibn Ibrāhīm lists possible readings of his name as *Barijān*, *Barijān*, *Birrijān*, *Barishān*, *Barishshān*, *Birishshān* (*al-I‘lām*, VIII, p. 57, nr. 1079). “Barragán” in Spanish means “young man” or “warrior,” and “Barraġān” and “Barragán” are last names which still employed in the Spanish speaking world. If one considers “Barraġān” to be of Spanish (or possibly Celtic) provenance, this would suggest that the author’s purported Arab Ifriqī-Lakhmī origins are a cover for his *muwallad* origins, just as Abū Madyan’s designation “al-Anṣārī” possibly served as a cover for his *muwallad* origins (Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 132). “Barragán,” however, is also an Arabic loanword (*Barrakān*) referring to a metonymic occupational name for a maker or seller of fustian, a cotton and linen fabric.

¹¹ One possible explanation put forth by Gril is that the name is an Arabization of the Berber proper name Ibaragan, or of the Berber Touareg subgroup *Ibaragan* (Gril, “La ‘lecture supérieure,” p. 510, n. 1). If one accepts this second thesis, then our author would have carried a mixture of Berber and Arab Lakhmī blood. It was often the case in al-Andalus that ethnic background was not known with precision. In medieval Spain, interracial marriages with the local women and the system of *walā’* produced a considerable group of people who claimed Arab parentage. See *EI*², “Al-Andalus,” (G. Colin) under “Population of al-Andalus”.

¹² Suyūṭī, *Bugbyat*, II, p. 95, nr. 1526.

¹³ ‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mizān*, V, p. 173, nr. 4761.

¹⁴ For ‘Alī b. Abī al-Rijāl, see *EI*², “Ibn Abi l-Ridjāl,” (D. Pingree); *GAL*, I, p. 224; *S I*, p. 401; *GAS*, VII, pp. 186–88; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, I, p. 217; Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, IV, p. 288. A famous astrologer, born in Fez ca. 406/1015 and died in Qayrawān ca. 454/1062. Known in the Latin Middle Ages as Abenragel, his eight-part astrological encyclopedia is entitled *al-Bārī‘ fī abkām al-nujūm* and was translated into Old Castilian in 1254

corruption of Abū al-Rijāl.¹⁵ He is even now referred to by locals who live around his tomb in Marrakesh as Sīdī Berrijāl, i.e., Sīdī Abū al-Rijāl. Moreover, the family name Abū al-Rijāl is still known in the Moroccan city of Salé, and was well-known in premodern Yemen.¹⁶

His Brother and “Grandson”

One source relates that Ibn Barrajan had a brother who was competent in Ḥadīth and excelled in medicine.¹⁷ This brother shared the same Ḥadīth teachers as our author, as well as his brother’s interests in Galenic medicine.¹⁸ Also, Ibn Barrajan probably married and fathered children, since the biographers record the name of someone they call his “grandson” (*ḥafīd*). A contemporary of the famous mystic Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 637/1240), this so-called “grandson” is known in the sources as Ibn Barrajan as well, whose full name was Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Barrajan (d. 627/1229). As such, the two figures (our author and the *ḥafīd*) are often confused in medieval and modern biographies.¹⁹

under the title *El libro conplido en los iudizios de las estrallas* (“The Complete Book on the Judgment of the Stars”). This astrologer was a Shaybānī of the ‘Adnānī Meccan tribe of Banū Shayba who possess the keys to the door of the Ka’ba, whereas Ibn Barrajan is a Lakhmī from the Qaḥṭānī tribe of Banū Lakhm. It is unlikely that our author is a descendant of the astrologer, though he may have known of the latter’s work and used it for his astrological speculations.

¹⁵ See Küçük, “Light upon light, Part I,” 163/1, p. 94, n. 48.

¹⁶ There is no evidence that Abū al-Rijāl is a name particular to the Banū Lakhm. However, the family name Abū al-Rijāl receives a notice in Maḥḥafī’s two-volume *Mu’jam al-buld-ān wa-l-qabā’il al-Yamaniyya*. Maḥḥafī describes *Al Abī al-Rijāl* as one of the famous scholarly families of Yemen, who were originally from Dhibīn in *bilād Ḥāshid* and who then moved to Ṣan’ā’. They claim descent from the eminent companion and third caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Al-Qāḍī Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Abū al-Rijāl (d. 1029/1619) is among the most famous of the Abū al-Rijāls, having penned several works including a biographical dictionary called *Maṭla’ al-budūr*. Apparently this family administered the pious endowments (*awqāf*) of the Yemen up to the fourteenth-century hijrī.

¹⁷ See Murrākushī’s *Dhāyil* VI, p. 490, nr. 1265. The brother taught Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥamad b. ‘Ayyāsh (d. 546/1151) medicine in Seville. Ibn ‘Ayyāsh claims to have copied Galen’s works and to have read them out to Ibn Barrajan, “the brother of Abū al-Ḥakam the ascetic.” His full name is not noted in the entry. Cf. Küçük, “Light upon light, Part I,” p. 93, n. 40.

¹⁸ Our author displays an awareness of medicine in the *Tanbīh*, which features several extensive medical discussions of the humors and the composition of the human body. E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 516–517.

¹⁹ For instance, Ibn Makhlūf’s (d. 718/1318) biographical work of Mālikī scholars *Shajarat al-nūr* and ‘Abbās al-Murrākushī’s (d. 1378/1959) modern work *al-I’lām bi-man ḥalla Murrākush wa-Aghmāt min al-a’lām* both provide two entries for Ibn Barrajan: (1) ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad, and (2) ‘Abd al-Salām b. ‘Abd al-Ra-

Although he is referred to as *ḥafīd*, he may have been in fact a great grandson, or a descendant of our author's nephew, 'Abd al-Rahmān. The *ḥafīd* is also referred to in the sources as the "son" (*ibn*),²⁰ for it is common in Arab custom to name a boy after his grandfather, in which case the child is referred to as the latter's son (*ibn*).²¹ Whether or not the *ḥafīd* was a direct descendant of our author, the two figures could not have met, since the *ḥafīd* was born *circa* 557/1161 (that is, some 110 years after our author's birth), thus greatly reducing the possibility that he was an actual grandson.²²

In any case, the *ḥafīd* faithfully carried on the scholarly legacy of his family, establishing himself as a reputable philologist and teacher of Ḥadīth. He was a student of the Sevillian grammarian Abū Ishāq b. Malkūn (d. 581/1185) "among others (*jamā'a*)."²³ Like our author, he was also a scholar of Qur'ānic variants (*qirā'āt*) and is listed in the biographical compilation of Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429).²⁴ He rose to prominence among the acclaimed Andalusī philologists of the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period. In his day, Seville continued to be a central hub of learning which attracted scholars and students from across the Peninsula. It was particularly famous for Arabic grammar and literature, and the *ḥafīd*, "Ibn Barrajan al-Lughawī" (The Philologist) was its most foremost scholar. He taught in Seville during the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period and trained a sizeable number of students there.²⁵ Righteous

ḥmān. However, both figures share the same works, teachers, and death date. See Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 116. Murrākushī also confuses the two figures in *Dhayl*, V, pp. 324–369, nr. 636.

²⁰ For Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barrajan's entry, see Dhahabī, *al-Ibar fī khabar*, II, p. 450 (year 536). For the grandson's entry, see III, p. 200 (year 627).

²¹ Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 116–117.

²² Kaḥḥāla tells us that the grandson died around the age of 70. In order for him to be a direct descendant of Ibn Barrajan, he would have had to be born to an elderly father some twenty-one years after the grandfather's death. Kaḥḥāla provides two entries, one for our author and the other for his *ḥafīd*. Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifin*; II, p. 113, nr. 6859; II, p. 147, nr. 7226.

²³ According to Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), "Abū al-Ḥakam the philologist (*al-lughawī*) narrated from (*rawā'an*)" Muḥammad al-Lakhmī (d. 616/1219). Lakhmī was also known as Ibn al-Murkhī, and authored many works including a summary of *al-Gharīb al-muṣannaf* entitled *Ḥilyat al-adīb*, as well as *Dharwat al-multaqī* on the description of horses. See Suyūṭī, *Bughyat*, I, p. 177, nr. 296.

²⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, I, p. 347 nr. 1646.

²⁵ 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ru'aynī, alias Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ru'aynī, from Seville, was a student of the grandson. He was a celebrated belletrist and master of the seven readings of the Qur'ān who counts Ibn Barrajan as one of his numerous teachers. Born in Seville in 592/1195, he died in Marrakesh in 666/1267 (Ibn Barrajan's grandson died in 627). Murrākushī, *Dhayl*, V, pp. 324–369 nr. 636.

and pious,²⁶ he was known as the “standard bearer of philology (*lugha*) in al-Andalus.”²⁷ He authored a critique of the lexicon *al-Muḥkam wa-l-muḥīṭ al-a‘ẓam* by the Murcian poet and lexicographer Ibn Sayyida (d. 458/1065).²⁸

Educational Formation

The religious sciences and the “sciences of the ancients” (‘ulūm al-awā’il)

The sources relate nothing of Ibn Barraĵān’s early childhood aside from his Ifrīqī ancestry, his grandfather’s migration to Seville, and his brother’s scholarly pursuits. Fragments of historical evidence about Ibn Barraĵān’s early educational training can be pieced together from the biographical sources and the general historical milieu. One of the characterizing features displayed in Ibn Barraĵān’s writings, and written about by his biographers, is his mastery of multiple fields of knowledge. He possessed knowledge in Qur’ānic exegesis, Qur’ānic variant readings (*qirā’āt*), Ḥadīth, Arabic grammar, morphology, poetry, rhetoric, theology, Masarrism, Sufism, and Ismā‘īlī teachings, and the science of the letters. He was, as one biographer put it, “a knower of different methodologies

- Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Abīdī (d. 646/1248) of Seville, “transmitted [Ḥadīth] (*rawā’an*) from Ibn Barraĵān and others.” (Ibid., V, p. 681, nr. 1283).
- ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā b. ‘Amrīl al-Kinānī, also a local of Seville who “transmitted from (*rawā’an*) Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barraĵān among others.” The latter excelled in Ḥadīth and Arabic, and, being of modest means, worked part-time in pottery manufacturing (*fakḥkhār*) with his father (Ibid., V, p. 420, nr. 713).
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim (d. 659/1260) was most commonly referred to as Ibn Sayyid al-Nās. Originally from Seville, this scholar is the master of the seven readings of the Qur’ān and counts Ibn Barraĵān among his teachers. He left al-Andalus after the age of 50 for Ceuta, lived in Bijāya where he served as preacher and *imām* in its central mosque (*jāmi’*), then was hired as preacher and *imām* of the new mosque of Tunis. There he taught Ḥadīth and was accused by local scholars of falsely claiming teachers in the field, probably because they were jealous of his high position. He studied in the Mashriq. He was a Qur’ān reciter, knowledgeable in tafsīr, Ḥadīth, transmitters, and literature. See Ibid., V, pp. 653–661 (Ibn Barraĵān mentioned on p. 655, nr. 1245).

²⁶ Firūzābādī, *Bulgha*, p. 185, nr. 201. ²⁷ Yāfi‘ī, *Mir’āt al-jinān*, IV, p. 52 (year 627).

²⁸ The title of the grandson’s refutation of Ibn Sayyida is *Radd wa-tabyīn li-aghlat̃ Ibn Sayyida fī al-Muḥkam*. On Ibn Sayyida, see Firūzābādī, *Bulgha*, pp. 202–203, nr. 228.

(*madhbāhib al-nās*).²⁹ Ibn al-Abbār describes Ibn Barraĵān as one who “possessed complete mastery of (*taḥaqquq bi-*) theology and Sufism, and combined [this knowledge] with renunciation and striving in worship.”³⁰ Ibn al-Zubayr acclaims him as a major scholar active in a wide variety of fields:

One of the greatest men of the Muslim West, a leading scholar (*imām*) of theology, the Arabic language (*lugha*)³¹ and literature (*adab*),³² a knower (*‘arīf*) of both esoteric (*ta’wīl*) and exoteric (*tafsīr*) interpretation of the Qur’ān, a skilled, critical (*naqqād*), and outstanding grammarian, a leading scholar (*imām*) in everything he spoke of, and without peer. He was proficient in arithmetic (*‘ilm al-ḥisāb*), geometry (*handasa*), and so on. He possessed the greater part of every discipline (*akhadha min kull ‘ilm bi-awfar ḥazz*) and freely applied it to Sufism and esoteric science (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*).³³

Although Ibn Barraĵān was probably largely self-taught, it is still somewhat surprising that a scholar who was active in such a variety of fields never undertook a journey (*riḥla*) to the East in search of knowledge, and that he never performed the *ḥajj* pilgrimage. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Aside from the fact that al-Andalus had become a center of learning of its own by the fifth/eleventh century and that our author could learn much by staying home, Ibn Barraĵān’s confinement to the Peninsula may have been due to political and economic reasons.³⁴ Born to a migrant middle-class family at an unstable time, long-distance travel would have been expensive and risky. The instability of al-Andalus during the sixth/twelfth century, the revolutionary outbreaks of Ibn Tūmart’s al-Muwahḥidūn movement, the proliferation of piracy at sea, and the menacing presence of Crusaders blocking land routes³⁵ would have prevented Ibn Barraĵān as well as a number of other renowned scholars from traveling to the East at this time.³⁶ In fact, several leading Andalusī jurists such as Ibn al-Ḥājj, Ibn Ḥamdīn, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, and Ibn al-‘Arīf discouraged Andalusīs and Maghribīs from undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*) on grounds that long-distance travel to the Mashriq was too perilous. In the context of sixth-/twelfth-century

²⁹ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, pp. 31–33, nr. 45. The term *madhbāhib al-nās* could denote knowledge of sects, though *milal wa-l-niḥal* would be a more common expression.

³⁰ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, III, p. 21, nr. 64. ³¹ Grammar, morphology, rhetoric.

³² Poetry, lexicography, grammar. ³³ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, pp. 31–33, nr. 45.

³⁴ His teacher Ibn Manzūr and disciple Ibn al-‘Arīf performed *ḥajj*.

³⁵ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadi, I, pp. 23–24.

³⁶ One prominent example is the Granadan Qur’ān commentator and cataloguer ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. ‘Aṭiyya, born in 481/1088 and died in 541/1146, also to a family of immigrants from the Mashriq.

al-Andalus, legal experts held that waging jihād and defending the northern Andalusī borders were greater duties in God’s eyes than performing the *bajj*.³⁷

How then did Ibn Barrajan acquire such a wide range of scholarly expertise over the course of his career? Confined to al-Andalus, seekers of knowledge like Ibn Barrajan could take advantage of the already notable scholarly resources at their disposal on the Peninsula, seeking out teachers from various cities of al-Andalus. They would not have had to venture too far from Seville to acquire a solid education. The decentralization of al-Andalus and the decline in Cordoba’s intellectual preeminence made it possible for Ibn Barrajan’s hometown to replace the former Umayyad capital as a hub for a variety of disciplines. Qur’anic studies, Arabic grammar, jurisprudence, and especially Ḥadīth³⁸ were subjects that he most likely studied in his hometown.³⁹ His primary Ḥadīth teacher, Ibn Manzur (d. 469/1077), was a member of the influential Banū Manzur family of Seville, which boasted a number of noted scholars and judges.⁴⁰ Ibn Manzur was a pioneering Ash‘arī who had spent a year in Mecca as a scholar-in-residence (*mujāwir*) studying *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with the Mālikī theologian and Ḥadīth scholar Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. ca. 434/1042), alias Ibn al-Sammāk.⁴¹ Ibn Manzur trained some of the most influential religious authorities of the al-Murābiṭūn period. He was so sought after that he attracted students from the capital of Cordoba. He taught Ibn Barrajan the authoritative collections of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, and possibly *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, evidenced by the fact that Ibn Barrajan demonstrates a profound mastery of this work in his own first work *al-Irshād* (see Chapter 4). Ibn Barrajan went on to teach *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and continued to teach Ḥadīth for most of his life.⁴²

³⁷ Ibn al-‘Arīf, *Miftāḥ al-sa‘āda*, pp. 28–29. See Hendrickson, “Prohibiting the Pilgrimage.”

³⁸ He was well versed in prophetic biography (*sīra*), and his impressive knowledge of Ḥadīth is demonstrated repeatedly when he cites, from memory, three or more variants of a single ḥadīth. There are countless examples of this in the *Tanbih*. For an example in the *Sharḥ*, see Mazyadī’s edition, I, p. 370.

³⁹ Only later did Valencia and Almería become centers for Ḥadīth study. See Urvoy, *Le monde de ulémas*, p. 55 (religious climate of Seville from 420–54/1029–62).

⁴⁰ See Ávila, “Los Banū Manzur al-Qaysī.”

⁴¹ Brown, *The Canonization*, p. 121. See also Dhahabi, *Sīyar*, XVII, 554–563, nr. 370; Idem, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, yrs. 421–440, pp. 404–407, nr. 120.

⁴² We know that Ibn Barrajan taught Ḥadīth after his move from Seville. This is indicated by an anecdotal report about Ibn Barrajan in Qurtubī’s *Tadhkira*, I, pp. 408–409. Ash‘arī theology probably featured as part of Ibn Barrajan’s curriculum under Ibn Manzur in Seville despite the hostility of many Andalusīs to speculative theology at the time. See Serrano Ruano, “Why did scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī?”

Lastly in terms of his education in the religious sciences, Ibn Barraĵān was too young to have benefitted from the Ḥadīth lessons of the illustrious Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), who died when our author was around 13 years old. Nevertheless, he had common interests in Ḥadīth, as well as Arabic language and literature, with a number of Ibn Manzūr’s youngest pupils, namely, Yūnus b. Muġhīth, ‘Abd Allāh b. Yarbū, and Shurayḥ b. Muḥammad, alias Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ru‘aynī (d. 539/1144).⁴³ Given their shared interests, Ibn Barraĵān would have followed a similar intellectual itinerary as his colleagues. These peers are reported to have studied in Seville with the expert of Ḥadīth, *fiqh*, and history ‘Abd Allāh b. Khazraj al-Lakhmī (d. 478/1086)⁴⁴ and in Cordoba with both the littérateur ‘Abd al-Malik b. Sirāj (d. 489/1086)⁴⁵ and the prominent Ḥadīth scholar and Ash‘arī judge Abū ‘Alī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105).⁴⁶ These scholars, Ibn Khazraj, Ghassānī, and Ibn Sirāj are the most plausible candidates for Ibn Barraĵān’s formal training in the religious sciences. All three died in Ibn Barraĵān’s lifetime, when he was, respectively, 32, 43, and 52 years of age.

The subjects that Ibn Barraĵān probably became acquainted with outside of Seville, since that city had very few specialists in these fields in his day, include theology, arithmetic, and geometry.⁴⁷ These subjects, as well as his training in literature, which comes across in his spontaneous and varied citations of poetry throughout his works, were likely acquired in Cordoba. Ibn Barraĵān seems to have maintained close contacts in Cordoba since we know that it was from this city that he was deported to Marrakesh at the end of his life.

Another feature of Ibn Barraĵān’s education is his interest in the “sciences of the ancients” (*‘ulūm al-awā’il*) as demonstrated in his writings. This term includes a broad range of “non-Islamic” disciplines ranging from mathematics, arithmetic, and geometry, to astronomy, astrology, medicine, alchemy, magic, logic, and philosophy. These “non-

⁴³ Ibn Barraĵān who was born around the same time (451/1059), had shared interests and students with al-Ru‘aynī, who was the grand reciter (*muqri’*), Ḥadīth scholar, and preacher (*khaṭīb*) of Seville. He was a student of Ibn Ḥazm, and he studied *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with Ibn Manzūr and may have been Ibn Barraĵān’s classmate. He also studied Ḥadīth under Abū Dharr al-Harawī, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bāĵī, Abū Muḥammad b. Khazraj, et al.

⁴⁴ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, II, p. 433, nr. 631; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XVIII, pp. 488–489, nr. 251.

⁴⁵ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, II, pp. 530–532, nr. 708; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, pp. 13–34, nr. 70.

⁴⁶ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, I, pp. 233–235, nr. 333; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, pp. 148–151, nr. 77.

⁴⁷ Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas andalous*, p. 55; cf. De la Torre’s biographical study in introduction to her edition of Ibn Barraĵān’s, *Ṣarḥ asmā’ Allāb al-ḥusnā*, p. 34.

Islamic sciences” were cultivated by scholars during the *ṭāʿifa* period, and especially in Toledo.⁴⁸ For instance, two Toledan judges, Ṣāʿid of Toledo (d. 462/1070) and Hishām b. Aḥmad al-Waqqashī (d. 489/1085), were known to have harmonized their training in the religious sciences with *ʿulūm al-awāʿil*. Ibn Barraḡān may have frequented such circles in Toledo before it fell to King Alfonso VI in 477/1085.

It is important to stress, however, that Ibn Barraḡān’s interest in the “sciences of the ancients” was very selective. For instance, he makes practically no mention of alchemy or magic, but displays some knowledge of medicine⁴⁹ and arithmetic.⁵⁰ He had a limited interest in formal Aristotelian logic (*mantiq*), but avoided rational disputation and regarded knowledge derived from logic to be inferior to revealed knowledge.⁵¹ As to philosophy (*falsafa*), it is clear that he had a general conception of philosophical doctrines and its perceived pitfalls. His writings are replete with criticisms of philosophers (*falāsifa*) and naturalists (*ṭabīʿiyyūn*), whom he blames for forsaking the revelatory knowledge brought by prophets.⁵² However, he does not seem to have devoted much energy to studying philosophers nor to refuting them in detail, as Ghazālī did in the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*.⁵³

⁴⁸ See Urvoy, *Pensers d’Al-Andalus*, p. 43.

⁴⁹ E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 516–517. ⁵⁰ E.g., *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 109.

⁵¹ Shortly after being developed by the school of Baghdad, the discipline of logic was introduced into the Iberian Peninsula during the caliphate of al-Ḥakam b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (r. 350/961–365/976) and was cultivated well into the seventh/thirteenth century. Contemporaries of Ibn Barraḡān, such as Ibn Bāja (d. 533/1139) and Abū al-Ṣalt of Denia (d. 528/1134), taught logic. Fierro, “La religión,” pp. 439–441. For a discussion of basic logical categories of interrogation in Ibn Barraḡān, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 413.

⁵² E.g., see Ibn Barraḡān’s comparison of the followers of revelation (*atbāʿ al-risāla*) versus the followers of philosophy (*atbāʿ al-falsafa*), *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 334–36 II, pp. 52–53; for Muʿtazilī stance on relation between divine Essence and attributes, see *Sharḥ*, I, p. 362, 402; on cosmology of philosophers, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 307–310, 315–316; on Nature and Naturalists, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 74–75; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 114–119; on philosophical ethics, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 126–127.

⁵³ Ibn Barraḡān was a contemporary of Ibn Bāja (d. 533/1138) who is considered to be the “first Muslim philosopher” of al-Andalus. The extent to which he knew of the latter’s writings is uncertain. By the fifth/eleventh century, the works of Kindī (d. 257/870), Rāzī (d. 313/926), and Farābī (d. 339/950) were known to scholars in al-Andalus. Although a number of *ṭāʿifa* scholars are recorded in the sources as “philosophers,” they do not appear to have any surviving works. Only the philosophical works of Jewish scholars like Ibn Gabirol are known during the fifth/eleventh century. In the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, philosophy was cultivated by Mālik b. Wuḥayb (d. 525/1130) and Ibn

Ibn Barraġān also exhibits knowledge of medieval astronomical discussions about the proportional sizes of the planets. While he concedes that these astronomical estimations may be accurate, he states that prophecy and divine revelation do not give any detailed specifications on the subject and therefore does not take a position.⁵⁴ However, Ibn Barraġān is highly critical of Muslim philosophers who recognize the earth's sphericity, and holds that the Qur'ān unequivocally speaks of a flat earth.⁵⁵ Finally, Ibn Barraġān had little interest astrology but a keen interest in astronomy. While he occasionally discusses names of constellations and divisions of the zodiac, his inquiries into future events were based on his understanding of natural cycles of time and divine determination, anchored in Qur'ānic findings and simple numerological calculations and not in astrology per se.⁵⁶

al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawī (d. 521/1127), who wrote on the question of reason and revelation. See Fierro, "La religión," p. 441.

⁵⁴ In the *Tanbih*, for instance, he mentions that the size of the sun is said to be 188 or even over 300 times greater than that of the earth. He is also aware that the moon and the other of the planets are said to be larger than the size of the earth. *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyādī, II, pp. 238–239.

⁵⁵ Ibn Barraġān does not specify names of proponents of the round earth theory. Figures he has in mind are probably early Greek astronomers, in addition to Muslim polymaths such as Farghānī (d. 247/861) and Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048). Ibn Barraġān explains that the orthodox "Followers of the Message" and the deviating "Followers of the Philosophers" "differ on what the shape of the earth is. The Followers of the Message say that it is flat, while the Followers of the Philosophers say that it is spherical. The Followers of the Message rely on the method of revelation and bind their faith to reports. God says: *And the earth, We stretched it forth (farashnāhā) (Q 51:48), and the earth, after that He extended it (dabāhā) (Q 79:30), He says: And God has made the earth for you spread out (Q 71:19).* The Followers of the Philosophers rely on the method of observing the revolutions of the spheres. Had they traced the truth of the report, they would arrive at true knowledge thereof. For God first created the earth in the shape of a sphere (*kura*), then He extended and flattened it. The earth began to stretch, and He anchored the mountains on it, and erected its mountaintops with the scale and shaped them according to its structure when He created it, that is, the earth. And had the mountaintops not been thus, then the radiance of the sun and light of the moon would not stretch forth upon them in one elongation, and this would likely contradict the verse: *It is He who created the night and the day, the sun and the moon, each swimming in a sphere (Q 21:33) . . . It is He who made the earth submissive; therefore walk in its tracts. (Q 67:15).* Earth is *submissive* by its flattening, and the mountains are its *tracts*." (*Sharh*, I, pp. 309–10).

⁵⁶ See Chapter 8 for a discussion of his understanding of the spheres, cycles of divine determination, and divinatory speculations. By reading Ibn Barraġān's works and comparing his cycles of time and divine determination (*dawā'ir al-taqdīr*) with medieval Arabic astrological treatises (see studies by Charles Burnett, Keiji Yamamoto and Michio Yano) it is evident that he was not an expert in astrology (*ilm al-falak*). Astrology was a subject of controversy in al-Andalus, but Ibn Barraġān was not accused

*His attitude toward jurisprudence (fiqh) and legal theory
(uṣūl al-fiqh)*

The extent of Ibn Barraĵān's juridical training and the names of his teachers in *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* are unknown. This is unusual for a field in which the sixth-/twelfth-century jurist networks were thoroughly mapped out by biographers. The lacuna does not necessarily indicate that our author was unversed in these sciences, but rather that he did not leave his mark as a jurist. Ibn Barraĵān's attitude toward jurists was condescending but tolerant. He conceded the necessity of jurisprudence in Islam, but was critical of the discipline's monopoly over religious discourse. He disapproved of the Andalusī educational curriculum for its excessive emphasis on legal studies, and discouraged his followers from delving too deeply into its hairsplitting minutiae.

In contrast, he held legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which he was intimately familiar with, in great esteem and occasionally delved into theoretical uṣūlī discussions in his works.⁵⁷ He believed that studying uṣūl enabled one to grasp the meanings of what he called the mutually resembling, or "consimilar," verses (*mutashābihāt*) of the Qur'ān (see Chapter 6), as well as the complex nuances of Ḥadīth, in contrast to purely juridical studies that detracted from man's essential spiritual pursuits.⁵⁸ Being primarily a scholar of Ḥadīth and a Mu'tabir, he viewed jurists and their schools (*madhhabs*) as secondary to the quest for God and maintained a nonsectarian attitude toward the *madhhabs* in general. While shying away from open criticisms of Mālikism, Ibn Barraĵān disapproved of Mālikī jurists who were fixated on legal details and who pedantically defended the positions of their legal school instead of seeking divine truth.⁵⁹

to astrological speculation. It should be noted that astrology was categorically rejected by Ibn Ḥazm and condemned by most Mālikī jurists, but had its defenders among some Andalusīs like the Almerian judge, historian and philosopher of science Ṣā'id al-Andalusī (d. 462/1070) and the Umayyad emir 'Abd Allāh (r. 275/888–300/912), who maintained that astrologers were not heretics (*zandaqa*). In the fifth/eleventh century a number of Andalusī astrologers attempted future predictions, like Ibn al-Khayyāt (d. 447/1055), 'Ubayd Allāh b. Khalaf al-Istijjī, and Abū al-Futūḥ Thābit b. Muḥammad al-Jurĵānī (d. 431/1040), who was put to death on account of one prediction (Fierro, "La religión," p. 442). These astrologists and their students, of which we know very little, do not appear to have provided Ibn Barraĵān with training in astrology and nor were they instrumental in shaping his worldview.

⁵⁷ See his legal and uṣūlī discussion of abrogation (*naskh*) in the Qur'ān and Sunna in *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 259–263; and *Īdāb*, ¶388.

⁵⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶200. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶196.

Like Ibn al-‘Arīf, Ibn Barraġān was a second-generation Andalusī and had no ambitions of becoming a state jurist. He was neither entrenched in the old juridical structures of power, nor was he vested in the *fuqahā*’s long-established approaches to scholarship.⁶⁰ He had no desire to prove himself as a jurist, and believed that seekers of knowledge should only “be acquainted with that which is indispensable (*mā lā budda minhu*) in matters of the ‘permissible and the prohibited.’”⁶¹ He urged his pupils to channel their efforts into the “most beneficial” (*anfa’*) form of knowledge, direct knowledge of God and His signs in nature. Juridical discussions are infrequent in his writings, and when he used the word *fiqh*, it was typically in the nontechnical and broader sense of “understanding,” “implication,” “deep insight,” or “moral lesson.”⁶²

In the following passage, he decries Mālikī scholars of his day who limit religious discourse to the positions of Mālik and his adherents. Note however that he refrains from openly naming the Mālikī school:

Anyone who professes a doctrine without proof from the Book or the Sunna, and whose wisdom is not glaringly evident—his doctrine is to be forsaken (*fa-qawlubu matrūk*). And whoever takes up religious knowledge for the sake of zealously defending and campaigning for non-binding forefathers ... is ignorant (*al-ta-‘aṣṣub li-l-aslāf min ḡhayr al-mawthūq bibim ... fa-huwa ummī*).⁶³

He evinces a near-complete disinterest in the approximately 500 Qur’ānic verses of legal import, and never bothers to mention differences of opinion (*khilāfāt fiqhiyya*) between jurists. When he makes note of a particular legal matter he does not go into detail nor does he attribute it to a particular legist or school.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus,” p. 187.

⁶¹ *Sharb*, ed. Mazyadi, I, p. 280.

⁶² For examples of nontechnical employment of the term *fiqh*, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyādī, IV, pp. 162, 234, 554; V, pp. 15, 170, 193.

⁶³ This quote is from the *Tanbīh*, cf. Hosni, *Manhaj*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ Rarely do Ibn Barraġān’s writings feature extensive juridical discussions. In his exegetical works, he typically glosses over Qur’ānic verses of legal import, or he interprets them allegorically. For instance, in a discussion of animal slaughter (*budn*) among the rites of the *hajj* pilgrimage, he understands *budn* to denote a sign of God’s blessings upon believers in the Hereafter (*Īdāh*, ¶628). For juridical discussions of the legally prescribed period during which it is not permissible for a woman to remarry after being widowed or divorced (*‘idda*) and marriage of pleasure (*nikāḥ al-mut‘a*), see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyādī, I, pp. 425–426; for rules pertaining to shortening the canonical prayers (*ṣalāt al-qaṣr*), see II, pp. 99–100; on sensual stroking (*mulāmasa*) and the ritual ablution (*ghusl*), see II, pp. 151–152; on the permissibility of embracing (*mu‘ānaqa*) and handshaking (*muṣa-faha*), see III, p. 128; on spying (*tajassus*) and slander (*ifk*) see IV, pp. 125–132; for rules pertaining to the alms tax (*zakāt*, *niṣāb*) see IV, pp. 284–285.

Earlier Sufis of the East like Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī had similar reservations about the legal schools.⁶⁵ Ibn Barraġān's attitude toward Mālikism was emblematic of Andalusī mystics of the period who maintained a merely "national" allegiance to their *madhhab* and did not strictly adhere to its rulings.⁶⁶ Ibn Barraġān was willing to break from mainstream Mālikism on certain points, and this comes across in his commentary on Qur'ānic verses pertaining to "temporary marriage" (*nikāḥ al-mut'ā*) (Chapter 6). He criticizes mainstream Sunnī jurists of all four *madhhabs* for considering this form of *nikāḥ* to have been "abrogated" (*mansūkh*) by Caliph 'Umar's prohibition on temporary marriage. In opposition to Mālikis, Ibn Barraġān insists that, in times of jihād, temporary contractual marriages may be reinstated for the purposes of expanding Muslim dominion.⁶⁷

In general, Ibn Barraġān's cautious reticence on legal matters can be explained by the fact that he preferred to avoid open confrontation with powerful jurists of his day. Unlike the audacious Ibn Ḥazm, he lacked authority as an established jurist to go against the grain of Mālikism.⁶⁸ Thus, Ibn Barraġān's criticisms of Mālikīs were always covert and moderate. In contrast to Ghazālī, he was much less vocal when it came to criticizing the dry legalism perpetuated by "worldly scholars" (*fuqahā' al-dunyā*). Quite the opposite, he rarely differentiated between "worldly jurists" and "scholars of the Hereafter" (*'ulamā' al-ākhirā*).⁶⁹ He praised pious 'ulamā' who mastered the different legal sciences – including branches (*furū'*), uṣūl, theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*), Prophetic Ḥadīth, reports of the Companions and early generations of scholars (*akhbār*), grammar, and Arabic language – for their ability to comprehend the "consimilar" verses of the Qur'ān⁷⁰ and for being the "heirs to the prophets."⁷¹ He also was not averse to

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Makkī's juridical affiliations, see Yazaki's *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 17. For instance, in the *Idāb* (¶14) Ibn Barraġān holds that the *basmala* is a part of the opening chapter of the Qur'ān, not an opening formula. This position is a Shāfi'ī opinion which goes against the Mālikī position. Since the Prophet specified that prayers are not valid without reciting the Opening Chapter (sūrat al-Fātiḥa/Umm al-Qur'ān), the status of the *basmala* in relation to the entire sūra has consequences for the validity of one's canonical prayer. For Shāfi'ī jurists, reciting the *basmala* is compulsory (*fard*) since omitting it invalidates one's prayer, whereas for Mālikīs adding the *basmala* is not recommendable (*makrūh*).

⁶⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 34–38. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 425–426.

⁶⁹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 256. ⁷⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 489–490.

⁷¹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 282; II, p. 14; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 413.

“legal conformism” (*taqlīd*), that is, the practice of delegating authority to a legal school (*madhhab*).⁷²

To some extent, this nonpolemical tone aligns with our author’s discrete and withdrawn temperament. As a general rule, Ibn Barraĵān refrained from naming any of his intellectual opponents including theologians and philosophers. He certainly affirmed the superiority of those who possess mystical knowledge (*‘ārifūn bi-Llāh*) and Mu‘tabirūn over exoteric legists (*fuqahā’*), but he did so without dismissing the latter’s place and function within religious discourse. To this end, he often encouraged his readers who could not grasp his mystical interpretations to remain faithful to the Mālikī literalist viewpoint. For instance, following a mystical discussion of the eschatological *ṣirāt*,⁷³ Ibn Barraĵān tells his reader that, should he feel incapable of grasping the import of his discourse, he should “halt and affirm the literal wording [of scripture]” for that, he says, is also a path that leads to salvation.⁷⁴ Hence Ibn Barraĵān acknowledged the validity and salvific efficacy of the ‘ulamā’s exoteric literalism while proclaiming a mystical knowledge (*ma‘rifa*) that rose above their epistemological confines into deeper realms of realization.

II HIS STUDENTS AND DISCIPLES

Ibn Barraĵān was one of the most important teachers of his day in al-Andalus, attracting students from around the Peninsula and training them in a range of disciplines. His last work, the *Īdāh* (Chapter 3), is likely a transcription of his spiritual audiences recorded and assembled in the presence of a small group of students, and thus offers us a window into his pedagogical method. The *Īdāh* lecture series would have differed from his regular Ḥadīth courses. The latter were presumably addressed to students seeking mastery and authorizations to teach (*ijāza*) a major Ḥadīth compilation, such as the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and included discussions of Ḥadīth narrators (*rijāl*) and the hidden defects (*‘ilal*) of various reports. In the *Īdāh* the Sevillian master comes across as an unstructured, somewhat prolix, and preachy mentor who was concerned not so much with the formal sciences of Qur’ānic readings (*qirā’āt*),

⁷² See his discussion of “legal conformism” (*taqlīd*) in the *Tanbih* where he compares a legal conformist (*muqallid*) to a blind person using a staff to find his way; cf. ed. Mazyadī, III, pp. 61–62.

⁷³ A ḥadīth-inspired doctrine of a razor-sharp bridge over hellfire which all mankind will have to cross on Judgment Day.

⁷⁴ *Sharb*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 108.

causes of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), or the juridical import of a particular verse. Instead, he aimed at instructing his disciples on how to behold realities of the unseen (*ghayb*) in a tangible and direct manner. In preparing them to transgress the boundaries of the visible world and undertake the contemplative “crossing” (*‘ibra*) into the unseen by way of natural signs, he exposed his disciples to his synthesized teachings drawn from a broad array of sciences woven into an elaborate cosmological scheme.

Ibn Barrajan was unique among his contemporaneous teachers. Unlike the famous Andalusī jurists Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī or Ibn Rushd al-Jadd with whom he shared pupils,⁷⁵ our author taught both the formal religious sciences like Ḥadīth, as well as mystical, cosmological, and occult teachings. He was considered by many as a senior instructor to whom advanced students would turn after completing their basic studies in the religious sciences. We know, for instance, that at least one pupil turned to him after completing his training in Qur’ānic readings (*qirā’āt*) with Ibn al-‘Arīf.⁷⁶

Ibn Barrajan trained a sizeable number of scholars,⁷⁷ whom Ibn al-Zubayr praises as “exalted and eminent” (*‘iliyya jaliyya*) people.⁷⁸ All of

⁷⁵ The most prominent of these co-students was Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Khalīl al-Qaysī of Niebla, a Mālikī jurist who died in Marrakesh in 570/1174 (Gharmīnī, *al-Mad āris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 131). According to the biographer Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn Khalīl was Ibn Barrajan’s last student. He studied law and Ḥadīth with Ibn Barrajan and with other leading instructors such as Abū ‘Alī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105), Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520/1126), and Abū ‘Alī al-Ṣadafī (d. 514/1120). (For Ibn Khalīl al-Qaysī, see Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, II, p. 43, nr. 116; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, p. 517, nr. 330.) He also trained students of his own in Ḥadīth. Ibn Qasī’s claims to being al-Qaysī’s disciple are spurious, as argued convincingly by Bellver, “Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 668.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-‘Arīf and Ibn Barrajan both instructed Abū al-Ḥasan b. Khalaf b. Ghālib (d. 568/1172) of Silves. He spent an extensive period in spiritual companionship (*ṣubba*) with Ibn Barrajan, Ibn Bashkuwāl, and Abū al-Walīd b. Mufarrij, and received oral teaching authorization (*ajāzū lahu lafzan*) in Ḥadīth from them. Although Ibn Ghālib was a Ḥadīth scholar of roughly the same age as Ibn al-‘Arīf, he still considered himself the latter’s student. Having spent so much time with Ibn Barrajan, Ibn Ghālib was also a learned mystic and he taught the *Sunan* of Abū ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī to Abū Madyan in Fez. It is probable that, like Ibn al-Kharrāt, he transmitted the oral teachings or written works of Ibn Barrajan to the Shaykh. Ibn Ghālib settled in northern Morocco at the town of Kutāma, and reportedly attained the Sufi station of *watad* (lit. “tent peg”) before his death (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, pp. 5–6; Ibn al-Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr*, pp. 14, 26. For his spiritual ranking, see his disciple ‘Abd al-Jalīl b. Mūsā’s account in Murrākushī, *Dhayl*, V, p. 211; p. 208 nr. 415).

⁷⁷ See Kūçük, “Light upon light, Part I,” pp. 101–104.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, p. 33, nr. 45.

his students were thoroughly grounded in the study of Ḥadīth, and most took an interest in mystical teachings or renunciation. His students were both academic trainees and spiritual disciples, and appear to have imbibed both their teacher's formal scholarship and his mystical teachings. Some, like Ibn 'Īsā al-Anṣārī (d. 574/1178)⁷⁹ and Sakūnī (d. after 540/1145),⁸⁰ seem to have been more drawn to Ibn Barrajan's mystical teachings. Others, like the bookish Ḥadīth student Qanṭarī, appear to have been purely scholarly apprentices.⁸¹ But even those who only took

⁷⁹ 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Anṣārī of Malaga was one of Ibn Barrajan's dearest and most devoted pupils. He used to visit his master regularly (*wa-ikhtalafa ilayhi*) from Marrakesh, and reportedly excelled in his teachings (*wa-bara'a fi 'ilmihī*) (Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, II, p. 272, nr. 787; Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-islām*, XL, p. 150, nr. 119; Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, IV, p. 123). Ibn 'Īsā received his training in al-Andalus and in Marrakesh, and came to be known as a "speculative thinker" (*nazzār*). This label, which he acquired in the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period, seems to suggest a connection with the Mu'tabirūn who were associated with *nazar*, or that Ibn 'Īsā's spiritual-intellectual formation with Ibn Barrajan was so profound that he became known as a mysticising theologian. Ibn 'Īsā enjoyed considerable socioeconomic standing (*dhā duniyā wa-sa'a wa-jāh*) and was favored by the al-Muwaḥḥidūn emir 'Abd al-Mu'min and his successor. He served as a preacher (*khaṭīb*) and congregational prayer leader for a number of successive emirs, and, in addition to his religious functions, worked as a letter composer and an administrative middleman for poets aspiring to be heard by the emir. One of his extant poems is written as an advice to kings and is entitled "The stars of politics" (*Anjūm al-siyāsa*), signaling Ibn 'Īsā's close rapport with the al-Muwaḥḥidūn court. (Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-islām*, XL, p. 150 (years 571–580), nr. 119 ('Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Īsā). See also Gharminī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 130–131.

⁸⁰ 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Sakūnī, son of an aristocratic family from Niebla, was a student of both Ibn Barrajan and Ibn al-'Arif. Although he did not produce any written works, the spiritual teachings of his instructors left a profound mark on him. He is one of Ibn al-'Arif's disciples, and the latter's spiritual advice to him in the form of letters has survived (Gharminī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 131). His biographers describe him as a man who renounced his considerable fortunes for a life of asceticism, donating his surplus to the poor. Sakūnī was also a miracle worker with a social following who was sought after for his answered prayers (*mujāb al-da'wa*). Sakūnī's popularity was probably perceived as a potential threat by the al-Murābiṭūn. In 540/1145, he reportedly took flight for the Mashriq, escaping the civil strife instigated by the collapse of the regime (Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, pp. 37–38, nr. 52).

⁸¹ The Ḥadīth scholar and historian Abū al-Qāsim al-Qanṭarī (d. 561/1166) of Seville attended Ibn Barrajan's classes in Seville. While in that city, he also studied under the direction of Ibn Bashkuwāl and Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī. A bibliophile with an exceptionally retentive memory and an insatiable intellect, he had a natural bent for Ḥadīth, a science which, according to Ibn al-Abbār, he possessed complete knowledge of (*al-ma'rifa al-kāmila bi-ṣinā'at al-ḥadīth*). Like other students of Ibn Barrajan who were drawn to Marrakesh by employment opportunities, he settled in the al-Muwaḥḥidūn capital and died there (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, p. 455, nr. 291 (al-Qanṭarī)). According to the biographer Ibn al-Abbār, Qanṭarī transmitted Ibn Barrajan's *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, and his Qur'ān commentary *Tanbih al-afḥām*. He is not mentioned as having transmitted Ibn

an interest in their master's formal sciences would have known that he used Ḥadīth as a vehicle for mystical speculation.

Ibn Barrajan's students went on to disseminate the teachings of the Mu'tabirūn among the burgeoning circle around Abū Madyan in the Maghrib, and their southwardly move from Seville to the al-Muwahhīdūn capital in Marrakesh served to invigorate Maghribī Sufism. Two figures associated with Ibn Barrajan – his prominent direct disciple, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ, as well as his indirect disciple, al-Mahdawī⁸² – were teachers of Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Arabī.

Ibn al-Kharrāṭ (d. 581/1185) was Ibn Barrajan's most prominent disciple and therefore deserves special mention. He was born in 514/1120 or 515/1121 and counts the Sevillian master among his Ḥadīth transmitters.⁸³ Well-traveled and highly regarded, he studied with Andalusī and Mashriqī teachers, including Ṭāriq b. Mūsā b. Ya'īsh (d. 549/1154) of Valencia and the celebrated Damascene historian and muḥaddith Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1175). He lived, taught, and died in the coastal town of Bijāya (present-day Algeria) during the turbulent collapse of the al-Murābiṭūn where he served as the head preacher (*khaṭīb*). He was known for his deep knowledge of Ḥadīth narrators (*rijāl*) and hidden defects (*'ilal*), and was competent in (*mushārik*) Arabic literature (*adab*) and poetry. He earned the exalted title of "Preserver" (*ḥāfiẓ*) of Ḥadīth and specialized in *aḥādīth al-ahkām*, that is, ḥadīth reports that bear legal import.

Ibn al-Kharrāṭ shared many of Ibn Barrajan's interests. Just as the latter attempted to synthesize and establish a concordance of Qur'ānic and

Barrajan's *Irshād* nor the *Īdāḥ* (See Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, I, p. 216, nr. 734; II, p. 29, nr. 85; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, p. 455, nr. 291).

⁸² 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Mahdawī was a native of the coastal port of al-Mahdiyya, and died at Tunis in 621/1224. Mahdawī was one of Abū Madyan's top disciples, and a favored teacher of Ibn 'Arabī. He died some ninety years after Ibn Barrajan, and should be considered an indirect disciple of Ibn Barrajan. He taught Ibn Barrajan's last work, *Īdāḥ al-ḥikma*, to the young Ibn al-'Arabī at his center of instruction in Tunis in 590/1194. It is possible, though unlikely, that Mahdawī studied the *Īdāḥ* directly under Ibn Barrajan. The *Īdāḥ* was composed around the early 530s. Assuming Mahdawī studied the *Īdāḥ* with Ibn Barrajan at the age of twenty, then he would have taught Ibn 'Arabī at eighty, and died at over one hundred years old. Mahdawī stands as another proof of the connection between the Andalusī mystical tradition of Ibn Barrajan and early Maghribī Sufism. See Elmore, "Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Mahdawī." Mahdawī's tomb, situated north of the capital Tunis in al-Marsā, was burned to the ground by an unidentified Salafī group in early 2013.

⁸³ His full name is 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥusayn b. Sa'īd al-Azdī al-Ishbīlī. See Dhahabī, *K. Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, IV, pp. 1350–1352, nr. 1100 ('Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ishbīlī). See Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, II, nr. 244. Cf. Addas, *Quest*, p. 45.

ḥadīthī teachings in his earliest work, *al-Irshād ilā subul al-rashād*, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ attempted a symbiosis of law and Ḥadīth in his most famous works entitled *al-Aḥkām al-kubrā*,⁸⁴ *al-Wuṣṭā*, and *al-Ṣuḡhrā*, which still survive in manuscript.⁸⁵ Moreover, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ assembled the six canonical Ḥadīth collections into a single anthology. He compiled a compendium (*jam'*) of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim, another for the six canonical Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, in addition to the voluminous encyclopedia of the Arabic language *al-Hāwī*.⁸⁶ But beyond Ḥadīth and language studies, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ also carried on Ibn Barraḡān's spiritual legacy. Like his master, he was ascetically inclined and gained a reputation for abstinence (*wara'*) and strict adherence to the behavioral model of the Prophet (*sunna*). His writings were replete with admonitions, callings onto renunciation, and reminders of the hereafter. He also devoted some of his prose and poetry writings exclusively to renunciation (*zuhd*). Notably, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ built a close rapport with Abū Madyan and served as an important link between the Mu'tabirūn tradition of al-Andalus and the emergent school of Sufism in North Africa.⁸⁷ Ibn al-Kharrāṭ also instructed the young Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Arabī between 578/1182 and 580/1184.

III ESCHEWING THE SULTAN (INQIBĀD 'AN AL-SULTĀN), POLITICAL VIEWS, AND DECEASE

Practice of *Inqibād*

At a certain point in his career, Ibn Barraḡān left the city of Seville where he taught⁸⁸ and settled in a rural village west of his hometown. At a comfortable distance from central authorities, state jurists, and Seville's commotion, Ibn Barraḡān taught, wrote, and led a contemplative life of worship, study,

⁸⁴ This work was followed up and supplemented by others, including Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's (d. 628/1230) *Bayān al-waḥm wa-l-ihām fīmā waqa'a min al-khalal fī al-Aḥkām al-kubrā li-'Abd al-Ḥaqq*, and Ibn 'Abd al-Malik's (d. 703/1303) *al-Jam' bayna kitābay Ibn al-Qaṭṭān wa-Ibn al-Muwāfiq 'alā kitāb al-Aḥkām li-Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqq*; cf. Küçük, "Light upon light, Part I, p. 102, n. 126.

⁸⁵ Yusuf Ağa Library (Konya), Ms. 5059–5064.

⁸⁶ For descriptions of his works, see Suyūṭī, *Mu'jam*, p. 482; Ibn al-Qunfudh, *al-wafayāt*, p. 293; cf. Küçük, "Light upon light, Part I," p. 103, n. 129.

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, III, pp. 120–121, nr. 299; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXI, p. 198, nr. 99. For his relationship to Abū Madyan, see Ghubrīnī, *Unwān al-dirāya*, p. 73, nr. 5; Ibn al-Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr*, pp. 34–35. Cf. Bellver, "Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus," p. 668, n. 61.

⁸⁸ Qanṭarī reportedly studied with him in Seville. Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, p. 455, nr. 291 (al-Qanṭarī).

meditation, and the training of a small circle of disciples. His move to the backlands of Seville seems to signal an inner transformation from Ḥadīth scholarship to the Mu‘tabirūn tradition, or at least a conscious effort to be closer to nature in order to devote himself entirely to God and avoid fame and celebrity (*khumūl*). His retreat into solitude probably took place around 490/1096 when he had reached the age of forty, an age that he liked to call “the second repentance (*tawba thāniya*), i.e., renunciation of the world and its people, and devoting oneself entirely to God.”⁸⁹ Ibn Barraĵān’s shift from Muḥaddith to Mu‘tabir is evident in his written output. His first major work, *al-Irshād*, is a monumental achievement in the field of Ḥadīth and bears few signs of mystical inclination. In contrast, his second major work, *Sharḥ al-asmā’* (Chapter 4), is impregnated with mystical doctrines and bears the stamp of the Mu‘tabirūn tradition.

The exact location of Ibn Barraĵān’s village is hinted at by his disciple Ibn al-Mālaqī (d. 574/1178), who is reported to have paid him a visit at a village (*qarya*) in the district of Aljarafe (*iqḷīm al-Sharaf*), west of Seville, in the direction of Ṭilyāṭa (Tejada) of the al-Baṣal district. The Aljarafe district spanned a massive area west of Seville and comprised some 8,000 villages.⁹⁰ These villages of Aljarafe were cooler than the city, and wealthy Sevillans often took up residence there. Bellver identifies the location where Ibn Barraĵān presumably led his discreet life as the modern-day village of Albaida de Aljarafe or Olivares, which are both approximately 17 kilometers west of Seville.⁹¹

Ibn Barraĵān only took on a small number of students who were spiritually inclined or who possessed enough resolve to temporarily forsake the comforts of the city for a spartan life in the countryside. In his audiences, he preached that solitude (*waḥda*) and famelessness (*khumūl*) were beneficial to the heart and more conducive to spiritual wayfaring:⁹²

Solitude is closer to wellbeing (*salāma*), a relief from confronting people, and a healing for the soul. It is a surer means of cultivating truthfulness, and a [source of] wellbeing for those who want to journey to God and the Hereafter.⁹³

⁸⁹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 140.

⁹⁰ This is according to the explorer and historian al-Ḥimyarī (d. 900/1495), author of *al-Rawḍ al-mi‘tār fī khabar al-aqtār*. Lévi-Provençal extracted a description of the Iberian Peninsula from Ḥimyarī and produced a critical edition with a parallel French translation; p. 101; al-‘Udhri, *Nuṣūs ‘an al-Andalus*, pp. 23–24. Cf. Ṭāha, *The Muslim Conquest*, p. 111.

⁹¹ Bellver, “Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 664.

⁹² Hosni, *Manhaj*, p. 7; n/p, cited from *Tanbīh al-Afhām*.

⁹³ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 280.

He advised followers not to seek social prominence (*jāb*) and to keep away from the court. He preached:

Do not associate with the rich, and do not befriend sons of rulers (*abnā' al-mulūk*).
Convene instead with the poor and destitute.⁹⁴

Ibn Barrajan was noted by biographers for being a recluse who shunned fame and celebrity.⁹⁵ He strongly self-identified with the “retreaters from the political sphere,” *munqabiḍūn*. His own teachers were undoubtedly *munqabiḍūn* who influenced his religious views and politics. His preference for isolation bore the mark of *inqibād*, since it was a common for the retreaters (*munqabiḍūn*) to confine themselves in their homes, mosques, rural hermitages, military outposts (*ribāt*), or out-of-the-way villages.⁹⁶ Although he was not recorded as a *munqabiḍ* by the biographers – i.e., he was not offered a judgeship and therefore never turned down an official post – Ibn Barrajan was deeply influenced by this movement.

Ibn Barrajan probably made an average – but not Spartan – livelihood from seasonal agricultural harvests or from an inherited family plot in Aljarafe.⁹⁷ Aljarafe was and continues to be an important center for olive oil production, a business which Ibn Barrajan was probably invested in. Despite basic methods of extraction, the output of olive oil in the medieval period sometimes exceeded local needs, and surpluses were exported to different regions of the Islamic world.⁹⁸ Interestingly, the olive tree (*shajarat al-zaytūn*) deeply informs Ibn Barrajan’s mystical imagination and takes on a central cosmological significance in his later writings, figuring as a concrete symbol for his doctrine of “The Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created” (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*).⁹⁹ That the

⁹⁴ Ibid., I, p. 282. ⁹⁵ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, p. 33, nr. 45.

⁹⁶ Marín, “Zuhhād of al-Andalus,” p. 113.

⁹⁷ Several clues seem to indicate that Ibn Barrajan owned some land and was of independent means. In his writings, he evinces in-depth knowledge of seasonal patterns. Moreover, he taught pro bono, did not receive a state pension as a judge, and therefore did not depend on the support of patrons for his livelihood. Whereas the quest for patronage forced many medieval scholars, such as Avicenna and Farābī, to move from city to city, Ibn Barrajan spent most of his life in one area.

⁹⁸ The medieval geographer of Sicily, Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (d. 560/1165) describes Aljarafe as an important agricultural center of olive production in al-Andalus. See his descriptive compendium of geographical data, *Nuzhat al-mushṭāq*, II, p. 541 (under al-Iqlīm al-Rābī', al-Juz' al-Awwal).

⁹⁹ See Ibn Barrajan’s discussions of the symbolism of the blessed tree (*al-shajara al-mubāraka*) as a container of God’s light, a divine self-disclosure, an anticipation of the beatific vision, and an embodiment of his doctrine of the Real Upon Which Creation is Created (HMBK). *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadi, III, pp. 222, 237–238, IV, pp. 93, 144–146, 148–155, 464–466; V, p. 122.

natural world provided inspiration for his spiritual quest is palpable throughout his works, and particularly in the *Īdāb*, where he ceaselessly draws inspiration from the natural world, and demonstrates an intimate knowledge of seasonal crops and harvests.¹⁰⁰

Methodical Practice of *I'tibār*

In addition to *inqibād*, Ibn Barraĵān's voluntary isolation suggests that he methodically practiced esoteric Masarrī teachings which stressed the severing of worldly ties and leading a life of seclusion as a means of spiritual realization.¹⁰¹ As we saw above, Masarrī doctrines were the cornerstone of Ibn Barraĵān's writings. He taught that beholding God's signs in nature with a contemplative eye is more spiritually beneficial than perusing books, for direct experience of the natural world where God discloses Himself leaves an imprint upon the soul and allows it to ascend in contemplation all the way to the divine throne. Indeed, it is the surest way of unveiling the realities of the hereafter, since:

The heart is alive, and the pen is dead . . . and the shortest path [to unveiling] that I know of is to train the soul by cultivating stillness of its inner movements, then stillness of the outward body . . . and *if possible to reside in a place where you can behold natural phenomena from near and afar*, for that is most helpful in your quest. But if you cannot [live in solitude] then behold it by casting your sight upon the sky, earth, winds, plants, animals and other existents . . . and on that basis consider their [archetypal] analogues in the unseen.¹⁰² (emphasis added)

One of the most important practical teachings of Ibn Barraĵān's is training his disciples to see with the eye of correspondence the parallel realities between this world and the hereafter. Through repetitive practice, perceiving the world below as a reflection of the heavens above becomes second nature and transforms the novice's relation to the world. For Ibn Barraĵān, pondering the signs of God and their correlations to the hereafter was not a mere exercise in analogical reasoning. It was part and parcel of his spiritual method:

Reflecting on the signs of God, and acquiring knowledge of them is the most excellent act of worship, because it draws one into [a state of] remembrance within the remembrance (*al-dhikr fī al-dhikr*). Moreover, this mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) only comes from lengthy meditation and repeated *i'tibār* of God's

¹⁰⁰ E.g., *Īdāb*, ¶582. ¹⁰¹ Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus," p. 183.

¹⁰² *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 101. A similar passage is found in *ibid.*, II, p. 113.

creation and artisanry. Thus, reflective thought (*tafakkur*) gives rise to *i'tibār*, and through *i'tibār* the invisible becomes manifest.¹⁰³

Ibn Barrajan's writings are replete with examples of *i'tibār*, which he justifies by stating:

Our previous discussions by way of *i'tibār* should suffice the one who reflects upon and contemplates them, if only he is truthful to God in his meditation and possesses a heart that can witness the highest levels. However, we have sought to [illustrate] multiple paths to *i'tibār* and to ascertain the evidentiary signs in all forms of remembrance in order to facilitate it for the [reader's] understanding.¹⁰⁴

Elsewhere, Ibn Barrajan insists that the key to gaining certainty, and to fully undertaking the crossing and ascending in degrees of the crossing (*irtiqā' fī al-darajāt*) into the unseen is constant seeking (*mudāwamat al-baḥṭh*), methodical perseverance, and persistent repetition of the *'ibra* in the cosmos, scripture, and the human self.¹⁰⁵

Observing the first configuration (*al-nash'a al-ūlā*) [of the world] gives knowledge of the configuration of the hereafter; and pondering the existence of this world gives knowledge of the existence of the next; and observing the things of this world gives knowledge of things of the next; and pondering the rotation of night and day, and the succession of the ages, and the revolving of the spheres, gives conviction in the finiteness the world and recalls its smallness, through which one comes to know the grandeur, scope, and excellence of the hereafter.¹⁰⁶

Practice of *Dhikr*

Ibn Barrajan was generally laconic about the operational techniques of the spiritual path. A hint of his method, however, can be gleaned from his *Sharḥ*. He aimed at striking a balance between studiousness, which broadens one's understanding of God, and piety which does not overburden the soul. For just as God *did not reveal the Qur'ān to burden* Muḥammad (20:2), so Ibn Barrajan emphasized maintaining a balance between study and worship. He sought to stay on the "straight path" which consists in "seeking knowledge in such a way that it does not deter from one's worship, and worshipping in a way that does not deter from one's studies."¹⁰⁷

His practical spiritual guidance consists of a combination of moderate renunciation, living close to nature, perseverant and systematic contemplation, assiduous study, and long periods of remembrance of God through

¹⁰³ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 433. ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 299. ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 120.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, V, p. 120. ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, III, p. 512.

various names. He stressed the centrality of invocation (*dhikr*)¹⁰⁸ and of regular spiritual retreats (*khalwa*) where the aspirant withdraws completely from the world for an unspecified period of time.¹⁰⁹ He maintained that aside from the obligatory ritual prescriptions (*farā'id*) of Islam, the most sublime spiritual practice is to invoke the divine name *Allāh* and other divine names or the first *shahāda* (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*) as aids in concentration. This spiritual method, which prefigures practices of the North African Shādhiliyya, was not yet fixed as a formal litany with set numbers of invocations. It was at once fervent, loose, and unregulated:¹¹⁰

The most sublime invocation is to say *Allāh*, *Allāh* with a conscious presence of heart, then to repeat *There is no god but Allāh*, and then return to *Allāh*, *Allāh*, *Allāh*, *There is no god but Allāh*, and to do so over and over again. And if you wish, one can invoke *Allāh*, *Allāh*, *Allāh*, *the Forbearing* (al-Ḥalīm), *the Noble* (al-Karīm). *Allāh*, *Allāh*, *the Exalted*, *the Majestic* . . . thereby pairing up the name [*Allāh*] with all the names with a witnessing heart and a present remembrance. That is his most beneficial remembrance and the noblest of moments. Repeating *there is no god but Allāh* purifies the heart, whereas repeating *Allāh Allāh* returns the invocation to a cleansed heart and a purified inmost consciousness (*sirr*). And the same goes for repeating all the names with the name *Allāh*.¹¹¹

On a final note, Ibn Barrajan was heir to a longstanding renunciant tradition in al-Andalus, and his biographer Ibn al-Abbār describes him as an ardent worshiper and renunciant (*zāhid*). The practice of fasting and renunciation (*zuhd*) figured into his piety as a means for gaining divine knowledge. His renunciation rested on “three pillars,” namely (1) forsaking all [worldly] attachments (*tark al-'alā'iq*) and sources of livelihood, (2) disciplining the body by curbing its desires (*shahwa*), (3) and severing ties from people in order to foster intimacy (*uns*) with God alone.¹¹² Yet our author was against the excessively rigorous renunciatory practices of the Sevillan renunciants, for he deemed that this detract from the essentials, namely, contemplating God's signs and thoroughly immersing oneself in mystical teachings. He taught his followers to not overexert themselves in matters of ritual purification, worship, and seeking of

¹⁰⁸ See Ibn Barrajan's section (*faṣl*) on *dhikr* in the *Tanbih*, where he explains that the end purpose of all ritual obligations and prohibitions in Islam is the institution of remembrance of God (*dhikr*). He argues that this is confirmed by the seminal ḥadīth “actions are judged in accordance to intention (*al-a'māl bi-l-niyāt*).” Intention, without which actions are invalid, is pure remembrance, for it is remembrance of the heart and orientation of our actions toward God with sincerity. *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 284, pp. 410–13; and IV, pp. 313–314.

¹⁰⁹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 62. ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 69. ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.

¹¹² *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 558.

exoteric knowledge (*'ilm al-zāhir*) at the expense of esoteric knowledge (*'ilm al-bāṭin*), reflective thought (*fikr*), and meditation (*tadabbur*) of God's signs, for otherwise:

You will not rise above the rank of ordinary believers to the rank of Scholars Who Contemplate God's Dominion (*'ulamā' nāzirīn malakūt Allāh*).¹¹³

Political Views

Assessments of Ibn Barraḡān as a political revolutionary in the secondary literature rest on unsubstantiated accounts of his political views and activities. What follows is an assessment of Ibn Barraḡān's politics in light of historical and biographical data, as well as his own statements about Muslim political leadership (*imāma*), end-times, al-Murābiṭūn, and Mahdism found scattered in his vast corpus. These quotations do not substantiate claims that Ibn Barraḡān was a seditious political activist with an imāmate extending over 130 villages and who threatened a takeover of al-Murābiṭūn provinces in Iberia,¹¹⁴ nor do they substantiate Lagardère's assessment that he collaborated in Ibn Qasī's Mahdist revolt against the *muridūn*.¹¹⁵ Rather, they confirm Fierro and Gril's conclusion (both drawing from Nwyia) that his imāmate reflects his privileged position of leadership in mystical circles.¹¹⁶

The Imāmate

For the most part, and with only a few exceptions, the term imām in the Sevillan master's writings remains free from political, Mahdist, and Shī'ī connotations.¹¹⁷ Rather, this word most often denotes Adam's antecedence and preeminence over mankind (*imāmat Ādam*) or a congregational prayer leader.¹¹⁸ Sometimes he uses imāmate

¹¹³ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 212.

¹¹⁴ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 20. Garden takes Dhahabī's assertion that sultan 'Alī b. Yūsuf feared Ibn Barraḡān's involvement in a Sufi-led revolt at face value. See Garden's "al-Ghazālī's contested revival," pp. 208–220.

¹¹⁵ Lagardère, "La tariqa." ¹¹⁶ Gril, "La lecture supérieure" p. 511.

¹¹⁷ The term *imām* is used only to designate religious leadership in the *Īdāb*, ¶ 2, 27, 39, 42, 45, 46, 196, 218, 283, 296, 299, 372, 410, 441, 449, 511, 514, 515, 533, 55, 566, 659, 735, 376, 790, 797, 836, 901, 918, 989, 1037. The only two exceptions, to my knowledge, are *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 288, 291.

¹¹⁸ For an example, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 196; for a discussion of *imām* as prayer leader, see *Īdāb*, ¶42.

synonymously with religious authority, just as Ibn Bashkuwāl did in his biographical descriptions of particular scholars, calling them “imām” to designate unrivaled expertise in a given field.¹¹⁹ Likewise, in his correspondence, Ibn al-‘Arīf employed imām in a categorically religious sense,¹²⁰ and, when he addressed Ibn Barraġān as the “Supreme Guide of those who lead souls to the paths of salvation [and] the imām in possession of Muḥammad’s blessings as his legitimate representative,” he meant just that.¹²¹ Ibn al-‘Arīf’s letter was a purely spiritual discussion about the spiritual obstinacy of worldly people,¹²² and it is clear that he considered our author his senior Mu‘tabir and an authoritative interpreter of religious matters. Ibn al-‘Arīf’s choice of the term imām was not a hint of his passive approval of Ibn Barraġān’s presumed political imāmate, much in contrast to Sha‘rānī’s politicized employment of this term for our author in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*.¹²³ The referral of Ibn Barraġān as imām by Ibn al-‘Arīf and others¹²⁴ signals his importance as an attained mystic and scholar, much like an Imām Junayd or Imām Qushayrī before him.

Ibn Barraġān never rallied his followers to violence nor called them to activism under the banner of “commanding the good” (*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf*). In his work, he holds a classical Ash‘arī position of respecting the rights of rulers (*ḥaqq wulāt al-amr*) even if they be unjust and impious themselves.¹²⁵ That said, Ibn Barraġān did at times express strong political

¹¹⁹ Lit. *amma*, *ya’ummu* means to proceed in the direction of something, or “to lead.” Ibn Barraġān’s biographer Ibn al-Zubayr qualifies the Sevillan as an *imām* in theology and Arab literature, and as a mere *mushārik* “participant” in arithmetic and geometry. An *imām* is in counterpart to a *mushārik* (lit. participant) who, unlike an *imām*, is merely conversant in a certain discipline.

¹²⁰ In another correspondence, Ibn al-‘Arīf condemned the “reliance on oneself before attaining the degree of *imāmate* (*darajat al-imāma*) in knowledge (*‘ilm*) or practice (*‘amal*).” Ibn al-‘Arīf, *Miftāḥ al-sa‘āda*, pp. 90, 92. Cf. Bellver, “Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 673.

¹²¹ Nwyia, “Notes sur quelques fragments,” pp. 219–220.

¹²² Ibn al-‘Arīf was expressing to Ibn Barraġān his puzzlement at the worldliness and blindedness of peoples’ hardened hearts. See Bellver, “al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” pp. 672–673. I concur with Bellver’s translation of Ibn al-‘Arīf’s expression *mutaqaddimī taslīman* in reference to Ibn Barraġān as “my predecessor in surrender [to God],” *contra* Nwyia’s misleading translation as “*le Guide à qui je témoigne soumission de foi*.”

¹²³ Sha‘rānī (d. 973/1565) states that enviers (*ḥussād*) of Ibn Barraġān devised a ruse (*ḥīla*) and falsely told the emir that the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) was being proclaimed in Ibn Barraġān’s name around 130 villages. The emir summoned Ibn Barraġān to Marrakesh where he was executed, and had his followers in al-Andalus killed as well. See Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, I, p. 15.

¹²⁴ Other scholars who refer to Ibn Barraġān as *imām* include Zarkashī (*Burhān*, II, p. 140).

¹²⁵ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 137, 295. See also *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 90–91.

criticisms of the rulers of his day. In one passage, he equates imāmate with Muslim political rulership. This heretofore overlooked comment reveals his opinion on the longstanding Andalusī debate over qualifications for legitimate Muslim rulership (*imāma*). The statement follows Ibn Barrajan's comments on the Ḥadīth, "the most righteous of you should lead you" (*ya'ummukum afḍalukum*), which, although commonly understood to designate a leader of prayer, for Ibn Barrajan also had political connotations:¹²⁶

God commands Muslims to come together in governing their legal affairs and organizing their armies behind one man from among them *who is most virtuous* (afḍal). [The purpose of] all of this is to guide them to His oneness and to alert them to their greater purpose.¹²⁷

Here, Ibn Barrajan squarely adopts the position of earlier Andalusī mystics – Ismā'il al-Ru'aynī (d. 432/1040) and Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037) – that virtue and moral excellence (*faḍīla*), not genealogical lineage to the Umayyads, should be the criteria for selecting an imām.¹²⁸ This position diverges from the predominant opinion among Ash'arīs that the ruler be of Qurayshī descent, and suggests that he at least harbored sympathies for the anti-Murābiṭūn populist movements in southern al-Andalus.

Jihād

Ibn Barrajan did not hold emir 'Alī b. Yūsuf to be a virtuous imām. Most Andalusī 'ulamā' of the mid-sixth/twelfth century resented the al-Murābiṭūn for failing to wage jihād against Christians, for hiring Christian mercenaries, and for levying noncanonical taxes on Muslims. The question of jihād had already begun to preoccupy 'ulamā' when the Christian advance resulted in the fall of Barbastro and Coimbra (456/1063), Coria (471/1079), and finally Toledo (478/1085).¹²⁹ As we saw earlier, Alfonso I of Aragon "El Batallador" took Saragossa in 512/1108 with support from crusading nobles of southern France and the blessings of Pope Gelasius II. Ibn Barrajan, like Andalusī 'ulamā' in general, viewed

¹²⁶ Tabarānī relates a similar ḥadīth in *al-Kabīr*, XV, p. 433.

¹²⁷ This idea that a legitimate political leader must by necessity be a reflection of God's attribute of Unity is a typically Barrajanī notion. As we shall see subsequently, he shares al-Makkī and al-Ghazālī's view that the entire cosmos is perfect in its orderliness, but for Ibn Barrajan this was by compulsion of the divine names. (Ibn Barrajan, *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 78; and p. 37 of De La Torre's edition).

¹²⁸ Fierro, "The qādī as ruler," p. 104–105. ¹²⁹ Fierro, "Unidad religiosa," p. 399.

jihād as a collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*) incumbent upon all Andalusī and one of the emir's fundamental responsibilities. Jihād, he believed, would only cease with the fall of Rome and Constantine, two enemy empires he compares to Gog and Magog, enemies who will be slain by Jesus Son of Mary.¹³⁰ The failure of these allegedly affluent al-Murābiṭūn rulers to organize jihād was perceived as a sign of their corruption and weakness.¹³¹ A weakness, moreover, that was woefully reminiscent of the *ṭā'ifa* period and that he believed amounted to a betrayal of the Muslim community:

It is not acceptable for the imām of the Muslims to call onto peace nor to reciprocate it whilst Muslims have power and [can] triumph over their enemy. Nor it is permissible for him to abandon jihād in the way of God on any condition except with a view to the interests of the Muslim community and by a clear demonstration (*burhān*) from God. If the imām does not wage jihād in the way of God, he has completely turned himself against Muslims.¹³²

In another passage, Ibn Barraĵān states his position clearly:

Making an alliance with unbelievers [is an act which] drives one out of Islam (*tukhrīj 'an al-dīn*) for [the Prophet said] “a person is with whomever he loves.” However, this only becomes fully apparent to the subject [who allies with unbelievers] after death, as evidenced by God's ascribing the recompense (*jazā'*) to *the day every soul shall find what it has done of good and of evil* (3:30). This first manifests in the first resurrection [which takes place in the grave] . . . Do you not hear the verse *Thou seest many of them making unbelievers their friends. Evil is that they have forwarded to their account, that God is angered against them, and in the chastisement they shall dwell forever. Yet had they believed in God and the Prophet and what has been sent down to him, (5:80–81) and Whoso of you allies with them is one of them* (Q. 5:51).¹³³

Ibn Barraĵān was most likely tutored by *ṭā'ifa* period *munqabiḍūn* who were outspoken critics of their Andalusī kings and held a hardline stance against those who allied with non-Muslims. In the *Īḍāḥ*, he attributes his view that emirs who ally with non-Muslims fall outside the pale of Islam to an unnamed authority, presumably one of his former teachers:

It is reported that some scholars (may God be pleased with them) were asked about these emirs who ally with the Jews and Christians and appoint them over Muslims

¹³⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 512–513. ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 315.

¹³² *Ibid.*, V, pp. 152–153. In the *Tanbīh*, Ibn Barraĵān also makes the point that jihād is only obligatory when Muslims are strong, but when they are weak then the verses enjoining Muslims to fight do not apply (*Ibid.*, I, pp. 433–434). In light of other passages where he criticizes rulers for not taking up jihād, Ibn Barraĵān does not seem to believe this to be the case for the al-Murābiṭūn.

¹³³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 516.

for their services. He [one of Ibn Barrajan's unnamed teachers] said, "we have been told (and God knows best) that they do not die as Muslims." The proof he furnished for this judgment (God have mercy on him) was the verse *Whoso of you makes them his friends is one of them. God guides not a people unjust* (5:51).¹³⁴

Ibn Barrajan also censured the levying of noncanonical taxes (*maghārim*). These taxes were often used to offset the costs of jihād, but they were precisely the tolls which the al-Murābiṭūn had promised to free Andalus from:

Although unbelief (*kufr*) is not widespread in our day (praise be to God), extortion (*ghaṣb*) is nearly [widespread]. Actually, injustice (*zulm*), indifference, and lack of discernment between what is permissible and impermissible have become widespread.¹³⁵

Ibn Barrajan also resented the al-Murābiṭūn's hiring of Christian mercenaries to exact these noncanonical taxes from Muslims, and quotes another unnamed teacher who said that this treacherous act amounted to unbelief:

It is reported that some scholars (may God be pleased with them) were asked about these emirs who ally with the Jews and Christians and appoint them over Muslims for their services. He [now Ibn Barrajan is referring to one of his teachers] said, "we have been told (and God knows best) that they do not die as Muslims." The proof he furnished for this statement (God have mercy on him) was the verse *Whoso of you makes them his friends is one of them. God guides not a people unjust* (5:51).¹³⁶

All in all, our author's imāmate signaled high religiomystical authority, not leadership of a large-scale political rebellion, which, in any case, a discrete and reclusive octogenarian would not have been fit for.

End-times

Ibn Barrajan's stance on the anti-Murābiṭūn revolts which were breaking surface in the Maghrib and al-Andalus is worth exploring. It is important to stress that millenarian expectations were rife in the Muslim world during the sixth-/twelfth-century Crusader and Reconquista period. This was particularly true in al-Andalus where the northern al-Murābiṭūn borders were falling to the Christians. Unlike Ghazālī, who was unaffected by the Crusades, Ibn Barrajan was greatly preoccupied by these demoralizing territorial losses and saw them as manifestations of the

¹³⁴ *Īdāb*, ¶298. ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶285. ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, ¶298.

religious, sociopolitical, and economic decadence of his times.¹³⁷ He deplored the global Muslim community (*umma*) for being “just as decadent as Christians,” and believed that Muslims are just as sinful as the errant People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) described in the Qur’ān. In Ibn Barraġān’s eyes, the only claim to superiority which Muslims still possessed vis-à-vis Christians was their profession of an uncorrupted monotheism (*tawhīd*).¹³⁸

Despite his indignation, the Sevillian master was very discrete when it came to discussing the endtimes or the coming of the Mahdī.¹³⁹ It is certain however that he held the Hour to be near at hand. In one passage, he refers to a Ḥadīth about the tribulations that will afflict peoples’ hearts at the end of times, and explicitly affirms that the end-times “*is our time*, and God knows best.”¹⁴⁰ Ibn Barraġān expected the coming of the Mahdī to take place within his century. In a brief passage in his prediction of the recapture of Jerusalem in the *Tanbīh*, written in 522/1128, he tacitly implies that the Mahdī would return in some sixty years; around 583/1187.¹⁴¹ Together, these statements confirm that Ibn Barraġān held Mahdist beliefs, although he expected his Mahdī to appear in Jerusalem, not the Maghrib. He would have dismissed those who believed in a more local Mahdī, like Ibn Qasī or Ibn Tūmart, as mere posers.

Summoning of Ibn al-‘Arīf, Mayūrqī, and Ibn Barraġān to Marrakesh

When the popularity of mystically inclined scholars who promulgated an epistemology different from the al-Murābiṭūn jurists became too great,

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶434–35. ¹³⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 378.

¹³⁹ For passages on Mahdism, see *Ibid.*, V, pp. 13–14; *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 291. In the *Īdāh*, the Mahdī is mentioned in ¶621, 847, 878, 879. In one passage (¶ 878–879), Ibn Barraġān discusses “the two rightly guided caliphates” (sing. *khalīfa mahdiyya*). The first, he explains, is that of the Companions. The second is alluded to in the Prophetic report: “This affair [of Islam] will persist mightily (*lā yazāl zāhiran*), or [in a different version], will abide until the rule of twelve caliphs [has come to pass], all of whom shall be of Quraysh.” Ibn Barraġān states: “six or five of [the twelve caliphs] have come to pass [these being the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and presumably two or three others], and six or seven remain.” Here he appears to reject the notion that Judgment Day was nigh, and comes across as a non-Mahdist.

¹⁴⁰ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 294.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 8. Ibn Barraġān’s prediction is found in the *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 322–327.

the 'ulamā' appealed to the power of the regime to impose their will and to bolster their function as guardians of religious knowledge and piety. Such supremacy was rarely challenged in centralized urban areas where Ibn al-'Arīf lived. But in the rural fringes where Ibn Barrajan made his career, the only way the 'ulamā' could confront a popular mysticism that defied both their sociopolitical clout and their very *raison d'être* was by calling upon the authority of the state.¹⁴² Thus the state persecution of Ibn Barrajan, Ibn al-'Arīf, and Mayūrqi should be understood in the context of their religious and social ascendancy, not in their alleged political activism. Unlike Ibn Qasī, these figures made no deliberate attempt at organizing their followers. Moreover, unlike Ghazālī, Ibn Barrajan and Ibn al-'Arīf penned no refutations. As Fierro notes, the fear by the al-Murābiṭūn emir that Ibn Barrajan and Ibn al-'Arīf could start a rebellion like Ibn Tūmart was precisely that, an unfounded fear.¹⁴³

In the early months of 536/1141 (or late 535), the al-Murābiṭūn emir 'Alī b. Yūsuf summoned Ibn Barrajan, Ibn al-'Arīf, and the Granadan Zāhirī jurist Abū Bakr al-Mayūrqi¹⁴⁴ to appear for trial before him in Marrakesh. We are told that the three men were summoned because they "professed the same [suspect] doctrine."¹⁴⁵ In summoning these three men, the emir wanted to make public his intention of having the case be tried jointly with the *fuqahā'*.¹⁴⁶ The subsequent events which led to their deaths are ambiguous. We have two separate and contradictory accounts of how each of them met their ends. The only certainty is that they all died within a few months of their arrest, that Ibn Barrajan was perceived as a threat and was interrogated by a jury owing to his leadership role, and that the entire affair was enveloped in jurists' conspiracy theories and court politics. Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565), in his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, states that "enviers" (*ḥussād*) of Ibn Barrajan devised a ruse (*ḥīla*) and falsely told the emir that the Friday sermon (*khutba*) was being proclaimed in Ibn Barrajan's name in around 130 villages. Thereupon the emir summoned Ibn Barrajan to Marrakesh, where he was executed, and had his followers in al-Andalus killed as well.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Cornell, "Faḳīh Versus Faḳīr," p. 224.

¹⁴³ Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus," p. 196.

¹⁴⁴ See Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ḡam*, p. 139, nr. 123; idem, *Takmila*, I, p. 359, nr. 1279; Murrākushī, *Dhayl*, VI, pp. 169–170, nr. 452; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa*, III, p. 190.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ḡam*, p. 19, nr. 14; Addas trans. Cf. *Quest*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ *ET*, "Ibn al-'Arīf," (Faure).

¹⁴⁷ Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, I, p. 15. Sha'rānī's claim is not substantiated by earlier sources. He may have gathered his information about Ibn Barrajan's supposed imāmate from Ibn 'Abd al-Malik's (d. 703/1303) biographical dictionary, *al-Dhayl*, since the volume

Ibn al-‘Arīf’s Death

According to the biographer Ibn al-Abbār, Ibn al-‘Arīf’s popularity was perceived as a threat by the sultan,¹⁴⁸ but adds, “it is said (*yuqāl*) that the Almerian jurists unanimously condemned his teachings and denounced him to the Sultan, warning the latter against him.”¹⁴⁹ According to the biographer Tādilī, the emir’s calling was incited specifically by the Almerian judge Ibn Aswad (d. 536/1142), a student of the staunch detractor of Ghazālī’s works, Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī.¹⁵⁰ Ibn Aswad reportedly filled the emir with fear of the popular Ibn al-‘Arīf, and had him arrested and fettered at sea during the crossing to Ceuta. But when the venerable scholar arrived in Marrakesh, the emir reportedly experienced a change of heart and showed him great honor, giving him permission to return to Almeria. The emir’s change of heart probably had to do with his realizing the popularity of Ibn al-‘Arīf and the high political price he would pay for executing the venerated scholar.

Ibn Bashkuwāl is ambiguous about why Ibn al-‘Arīf died despite the emir’s pardon, but very precise as to the date: “he died on Friday night [a sign of piety], and was buried during the day on Friday 23rd in the month of *Ṣafar* of the year 536.”¹⁵¹ In contrast, Tādilī reports that he was poisoned at sea by Ibn Aswad, and that in revenge the emir had Ibn Aswad poisoned. Ibn al-Abbār dismisses this conspiratory account, maintaining that he died from illness that year. Ibn al-‘Arīf’s sudden death at the age of fifty-five does give credence to, though does not confirm, Tādilī’s account of a poisoning.

Abū Bakr b. al-Mayūrqī’s Death

The fate of Mayūrqī (d. 537/1142), a Zāhirī jurist who had journeyed to the Mashriq and acquired expertise in genealogy and Ḥadīth, is equally

that would have included his entry on Ibn Barrajan appears to be lost. Ibn Barrajan’s entry in the *Dhayl*, which is a sequel and complement to the works of Ibn al-Faraḍī (d. 403/1012) and Ibn Bashkuwāl’s (d. 578/1183), is partly preserved in ‘Asqalānī’s (d. 852/1449) *Lisān al-mūzān* (V, pp. 173–174, nr. 4761), including an important passage on his last days.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn al-‘Arīf was not favorable to the Mahdist revolutionary zeal of Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), and disavowed any association with his movement. In one of his letters to Ibn Qasī’s disciple and Murīdūn lieutenant Ibn Mundhir, Ibn al-‘Arīf staunchly opposed any form of rebellion against the established regime prior to the appearance of the Mahdī. (Addas, “Andalusī Mysticism,” p. 923; Nwyia, “Rasā’il Ibn al-‘Arīf,” pp. 43–56. Cf. Bellver, “al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 671).

¹⁴⁹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Muḡam*, p. 19, nr. 14; Addas trans. Cf. *Quest*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁰ References to Ibn al-Aswad can be found in Ibn al-Abbār, *Muḡam*, p. 126, nr. 116; Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, III, p. 849, nr. 1294.

¹⁵¹ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, I, pp. 136–137, nr. 176 (Ibn al-‘Arīf entry).

obscure.¹⁵² Ibn al-Abbār claims that he fled to Bijāya prior to his arrest.¹⁵³ However, Ibn al-Khaṭīb recounts that he was taken to Marrakesh for questioning, then lashed and imprisoned. Following this misadventure, he returned to al-Andalus and then set for the coastal town of Bijāya, where he died in 537/1142.¹⁵⁴ In Bijāya, he taught Ḥadīth, and reportedly established contact with Ibn al-Kharrāt, the student of Ibn Barrajan.

Ibn Barrajan's Death

Ibn Barrajan was arrested in Cordoba (*ashkhaṣahu min Qurṭuba*), not in his village west of Seville where he resided. In contrast to accusations against Ibn al-ʿArīf, the emir was not in a position to overlook the denunciations made against Ibn Barrajan. Moreover, he was the only figure to be interrogated by a jury. The early sources are vague as to the reasons for his trial. Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1448) and Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538) allege that it was on account of his involvement with the sciences of the letters, though this claim is not confirmed historically.

Of the two accounts of his death in Muḥarram 536/August 1141, Tādili's entry on Abū al-Ḥasan b. Ḥirzihim – the instructor of emir ʿAlī b. Yūsuf – is closest in time to the incident:

When Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barrajan was sent from Cordoba to the court in Marrakesh, he was interrogated about matters for which he had been criticized (*ibat 'alayhi*). He resolved them [i.e., the perceived heresies] on the basis of plausible metaphorical interpretations (*fa-akbrajahā 'alā mā tahtamilubu min al-ta'wil*), thereby dissociating himself from the criticism leveled against him. Abū al-Ḥakam exclaimed: "By God I shall not live long, nor shall the one who summoned me live after my death!"—i.e., the sultan. Then Abū al-Ḥakam died, and the sultan ordered that [his corpse] be cast into the garbage dump without funeral prayers, imitating in this what certain jurists had said against [Ibn Barrajan].¹⁵⁵

The violence of throwing him upon a garbage heap should be understood in the context of Ibn Barrajan's affront to the emir, as well as the tense and highly politicized epistemological rivalries over the nature of knowledge in the Muslim West. Ibn Barrajan had publically disparaged the emir, but he was not making threat of an insurgent backlash from his followers, nor was he simply voicing defiant contempt of the monarch. His was an assertion of spiritual supremacy over temporal rulership.

¹⁵² Mayūrqi's full name: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Bishr al-Anṣārī al-Mayūrqi. See Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ḡam*, pp. 146–147, nr. 123.

¹⁵³ Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'ḡam*, p. 139, nr. 123. ¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāta*, III, p. 190.

¹⁵⁵ Tādili, *Tashawwuf*, p. 170, nr. 51.

As a Mu‘tabir, Ibn Barraġān could predict the future by discerning God’s cycles of determination (*dawā’ir al-taqdīr*). He avowed that life and death were in the hands of destiny not the emir. The latter and his scheming jurists merely held political power, but Ibn Barraġān possessed divine authority which no regime could claim. The emir grasped the far-reaching implications of such a proclamation, and thus ordered for his body to be thrown into the garbage dump as per the jurists’ decree. Later, the emir would retract this decree in the face of a great gathering of people who defiantly attended the funeral as orchestrated by the emir’s own teacher Ibn Ĥirzihim:

Then a black man, who was in Ibn Ĥirzihim’s service and who frequented his sessions, reported to Abū al-Ĥasan [Ibn Ĥirzihim] what the sultan had ordered regarding Abū al-Ĥakam [Ibn Barraġān]. Abū al-Ĥasan [Ibn Ĥirzihim] said: “If you want to sell your soul to God, then do as I say.” He answered: “Order me as you wish and I shall do it.” Ibn Ĥirzihim said: “Proclaim in the markets and streets of Marrakesh, ‘Ibn Ĥirzihim says to you: attend the funeral of the excellent shaykh, the renunciant jurist, Abū al-Ĥakam b. Barraġān! And whoever is able to attend but does not, may the curse of God fall upon him!’” [The servant] did as he was ordered. When this news reached the sultan, he [also] said: “Whoever knows his excellence and does not attend his funeral, may the curse of God fall upon him!”¹⁵⁶

A second account of the same event by Murrākushī is preserved in ‘Asqalānī’s *Lisān al-mīzān*. It provides some nuance to the affair and confirms Tādilī’s narrative:

Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik [al-Murrākushī] said in his *Dhayl al-Şila li-Ibn Bashkuwāl*:

[Ibn Barraġān] was falsely accused in front of the sultan ‘Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufin, so he summoned Ibn Barraġān to Marrakesh. Upon arrival, [Ibn Barraġān] proclaimed: “I will only live for a short while, and he who summoned me will only outlive me for a short while!” An examining committee (*majlis munāzara*) was then convened, and they laid before him the matters which they censured. He gave an answer, resolving them with plausible resolutions (*kharrajahā makhārīj muġtamala*). But they were not satisfied with them, since they did not understand his intended meanings (*maqāşid*), and so they decreed in front of the sultan that he was an innovator (*muġtadi*).

It so happened (*fattufiqa*) that he fell ill after a few days and died in [the month of] al-Muġarram. Likewise it so happened that ‘Alī b. Yūsuf died after him in Rajab of the year [5]37. When [the sultan] was told about Ibn Barraġān’s death, he ordered that he be cast into the garbage dump without funeral prayers or burial, in accordance with the decision he had reached with the jurists who spoke against him. Likewise there was consent that someone from among the people of

¹⁵⁶ Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 170, nr. 51.

excellence, upon hearing of his death, sent out a black slave to proclaim publically in the markets: “Attend the funeral of so-and-so!”—and the squares were filled with people. They washed his body, prayed upon him, and buried him.¹⁵⁷

Within the North African Mālikī context, this account of Ibn Barraġān’s demise is the most historically convincing. Unconventional doctrines obtained through esoteric exegesis of the Qur’ān (*ta’wīl*) typically did not provide grounds for charges of heresy (*zandaqa*). Rather, they would have been deemed to be unwarranted religious innovations (*bid’a*).¹⁵⁸ An innovator (*mubtadi’*), as well as persons sowing corruption or causing public disorder (*fasād*) such as Khārijīs, were enjoined by Mālikī jurists to repent publicly (*istitāba*). If they refused three times, they would then be put to death. In contrast, a person found by a Mālikī judge to be a heretic (*zindīq*) was not afforded the possibility of repentance and was to be put to death on grounds of apostasy. Ibn Barraġān was labeled an innovator (*mubtadi’*), not a heretic (*zindīq*), and therefore an execution was legally unlikely, unless he categorically refused to repent publicly.¹⁵⁹ This explains why, (1) none of the earliest sources mention Ibn Barraġān as having been executed, and (2) why the biographers express sympathy for Ibn Barraġān without explicitly endorsing his “plausible metaphorical explanations.”

Rather than by execution, Ibn Barraġān died in prison as his health declined rapidly. He was presumably worn by travel fatigue in the height of the scorching Marrakesh summer, and was exhausted by the physical hardships of prison and the psychological trauma caused by the court trial.

His final resting place is situated by the old grain market (*rahbat al-ḥinṭa al-qadīma*) in the old medina of Marrakesh, only a ten-minute walk north of the famous Jāmi’ al-Fanā’ square, and a short distance from the tomb of his loyal lifelong disciple Ibn al-‘Arīf. On a final note, one may add that throughout his writings, and especially toward the end of his life, the reality and tangibility of this world grew progressively dimmer for Ibn Barraġān. In his later works, he never tired of reminding his reader that, for the true Mu’tabir, death is a blessing and this lower world a prison cell (*sijn*).¹⁶⁰ This Ḥadīth-inspired ‘ibra would have become ever more vivid in his heart as he lay incarcerated in a Marrakesh prison far from his homeland, awaiting his final hour.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, V, pp. 173–174; nr. 4761.

¹⁵⁸ Fierro, “El castigo de los herejes” pp. 283–316, esp. p. 312 nr. 69; cf. Bellver, “al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” p. 676, n. 110.

¹⁵⁹ Fierro, “Accusations of *zandaqa* in al-Andalus”; and “El castigo de los herejes.”

¹⁶⁰ E.g., see *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 389.

The Works of Ibn Barraĵān

Chronological Sequence, Manuscript Tradition, Central Themes

INTRODUCTION

Most medieval scribes, biographers, and modern scholars erred as to the exact number, titles, and/or chronological sequence of Ibn Barraĵān's written works, and recent western and Arab editors and scholars have reproduced many of these errors in print. These confusions all seem to stem from the mistitling of Ibn Barraĵān's works shortly after his death at the hand of a scribe sometime in the late sixth/twelfth century and the subsequent reproduction of these errors by biographers of the al-Muwaḥḥidūn period.¹ This chapter seeks to set the record straight by

¹ The earliest biographer, Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260), claims that Ibn Barraĵān left behind only one Qur'ān commentary, and that it was incomplete. There are two possible explanations for this. Ibn al-Abbār may be referring to the fact that the *Tanbīh* allocates lengthy discussions to sūras 1-4, and relatively shorter treatments to the remaining sūras. In this case, the *Īdāh* may have gone unnoticed by Ibn al-Abbār and was compiled shortly after its author's death on the basis of scribal notes. The second possibility is that the incomplete tafsīr mentioned by Ibn al-Abbār is the *Īdāh*, which lacks independent commentaries for sūras 9 (al-Tawba), 28 (al-Qaṣaṣ), 103 (al-'Aṣr), and 106 (Quraysh). Ibn al-Abbār may not have heard of the major tafsīr, whose authentic title is *Tanbīh al-afḥām*, since it was mistakenly entitled *al-Irshād* by scribes in the late sixth/twelfth century. As a result, the *Tanbīh* was thought to be *al-Irshād*, his first work on Ḥadīth-Qur'ān concordance. Since Ibn Barraĵān did not state the title of his tafsīr in the introduction, later copyists and scholars never spotted the authentic title of the major tafsīr. Most *Tanbīh* manuscripts in Istanbul and Konya are entitled *K. al-Irshād fī tafsīr al-qur'ān*. Others bear the title *Tafsīr 'Abd al-Salām al-musammā bi-l-Irshād* or *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li-Ibn Barraĵān*, and only occasionally *Tanbīh al-afḥām*. This scribal mistake informed biographers who came after Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 708/1308), thereby rendering the authentic *Irshād* on Ḥadīth-Qur'ān concordance *incognito* for two centuries, only to reemerge in discussions of Mamlūk, scholars who may have possessed an original copy.

establishing the authentic titles, chronological sequence, central themes, and citations of his works based on a close reading of the most reliable and incontestable sources available: internal citations that he provides in his writings.²

Ibn Barraġān authored four sizeable works, which will be examined in detail in Sections I–IV. The first, *al-Irshād*, is devoted to ḥādīth-Qur’ān concordance; the second, *Sharḥ al-asmā’*, is a commentary on the divine names; the third, *Tanbīh al-afhām*, is his major Qur’ān commentary; and the fourth, *Īdāb al-bikma*, is his minor Qur’ān commentary. He possibly authored a fifth minor work, *‘Ayn al-yaqīn*, which is lost.

I AL-IRSHĀD ILĀ SUBUL AL-RASHĀD

Ibn Barraġān’s first composition bears the title “The Guidebook to the Pathways of Guidance” (*K. al-Irshād ilā subul al-rashād*), and is presumably lost. The *Irshād* was a sizeable book on the concordance between the Qur’ān and the ḥādīth reports found in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. It must have been of considerable length, probably spanning several hundred folios, since he alleges to treat every ḥādīth mentioned in Muslim’s collection. He probably penned the *Irshād* between 480 and 490/1087 and 1096; that is, when he was in his thirties, having completed his Ḥādīth studies under Ibn Manzūr (d. 469/1077) and while studying and teaching Ḥādīth in Seville.

The *Irshād* was not lost because it received little attention by Muslim scholars. Quite the contrary, the *Irshād* was lauded by Ḥādīth experts, legal theorists (sing. *uṣūlī*), and Qur’ān exegetes (sing. *mufasssīr*), especially in the Mamlūk period, and surviving excerpts from it continue to be quoted into the twentieth century.³ Rather, as mentioned above, Ibn

² The chronology of Ibn Barraġān’s first three titles is correctly noted on folio 1a of MS Jārullāh 53m, which is a manuscript of the *Tanbīh*, wherein the twelfth-/eighteenth-century bibliophile scholar Walī al-Dīn Muṣṭafā al-Rūmī Jārullāh (or possibly an anonymous scribe) observes that “Abū al-Ḥakam compiled first, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, second, *Sharḥ asma’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, and third, his *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*.” He does not mention the *Īdāb*. (For Jārullāh, see Kaḥḥāla, *Mu’jam al-mu’allifīn*, IV, p. 75, no. 17910; Ziriklī, *al-A’lām*, VIII, pp. 118–119).

³ Ibn Barraġān’s famous introductory statement “Every Prophetic utterance is [contained] in the Qur’ān, or its root [lies therein], however closely or remotely, and regardless of whether one comprehends [this truth] or is blinded [from it]; for *we have neglected nothing from the Book* (Q. 6:38)” caught the attention of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī in *al-Ḥāwī li-l-fatāwī*, II, p. 160; and *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-qur’ān*, II, p. 258. The following modern works reiterate this statement as well:

- The Mauritanian Qur’ān commentator Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwā’ al-bayān fī idāb al-qur’ān*, II, p. 429.
- Jilāli, *Tadwīn al-sunna al-sharīfa*, p. 350.

Barraġān's major tafsīr, whose authentic title is *Tanbīh al-afhām*, was mistakenly also named *K. al-Irshād* by a scribe sometime in the late sixth/twelfth century. As a result of this error, Andalusī authorities such as Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) confused the two works and erroneously cited the *Tanbīh* as the *Irshād*.⁴ The authentic title of this first work, the *Irshād*, was accurately preserved in a different manuscript family which ended up in the hands of the Egyptian Mamlūk scholars Zarkashī (d. 794/1391) and Suyūṭī (d. 910/1505), who both knew the *Irshād* as a book on Qur'ān-Ḥadīth concordance, not a tafsīr.⁵ Given discrepancies in the manuscript tradition, there is reason to suspect that genuine copies of the *Irshād* survive as misattributions to another author, or as the falsely entitled *Tafsīr al-Irshāds*, which have yet to be catalogued.

The biographer Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260) does not mention the *Irshād* in his notice on Ibn Barraġān, but only states that he "wrote other works." Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 708/1308), on the other hand, describes the *Irshād* accurately as follows:

[Ibn Barraġān] authored the book *al-Irshād* in which he undertook to extract *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim b. al-Ḥajġāj's* (d. 261/875) aḥādīth from the Book of God. That is, at times he shows you [how] a ḥadīth [can be extracted] from the wording of a Qur'ānic verse, or from the [verse's] intended sense or import, or from the [verse's] allusion (*ishāra*), or from a combination of two consecutive or isolated verses, or from several verses, and so on. The content of the book faithfully accomplishes its purpose [of demonstrating ḥadīth's concordance with the Qur'ān], in a way that

- Ya'qūb, *Ayna 'l-sunna wa-mādhā fa'alū bihā?*, p. 22.
- The contemporary Egyptian jurist Qaraḍāwī cites Ibn Barraġān's famous quote on concordance in his fatwā entitled *bayna 'l-sunna wa-l-qur'ān*.

⁴ See Qurṭubī's encyclopedic work on eschatology entitled "The Reminder of the States of the Deceased and Affairs of the Hereafter" (*K. al-Tadhkira bi-ahwāl al-mawtā wa-umūr al-ākḥira*), where Ibn Barraġān's tafsīr is cited five times and mistakenly called *K. al-Irshād*, or *K. al-Irshād al-hādī ilā al-tawfiq wa-l-sadād* (I, p. 396). The citations are typical of Ibn Barraġān's *tafsīr*. They deal with the torments of the Day of Judgment (II, pp. 585-586), descriptions of the different states of people in the hereafter (II, p. 592); the state of the hypocrites (II, p. 740); a ḥadīth commentary (I, pp. 395-396) and a discussion of the intercession of the Prophet (II, p. 601). No mention is made of Qur'ān-Sunna concordance, and by the editor's own admission, Ibn Barraġān's Qur'ān exegesis "*Irshād*" is in *Maktabat al-Jāmi'a al-Islāmiyya bi-l-Madīna al-Nabawiyya*, 7292.

⁵ See *al-Ḥāwī*, II, p. 196, where in answer to a question concerning the circumstances of resurrection (*ahwāl al-ba'th*), Suyūṭī begins his discussion of whether Satan and human and jinnī unbelievers shall walk across the bridge that spans over Hell (*al-ṣirāt*) by pointing out that Ibn Barraġān proclaims in the *Irshād* that unbelievers do not walk across the *ṣirāt*. This position, Suyūṭī contends, is confirmed by some ḥadīth reports and contradicted by others. Suyūṭī is aware of Ibn Barraġān's authentic *Irshād* on Qur'ān-ḥadīth concordance, so I take this reference at face value. This *fatwā* can be found reiterated in works by later scholars, such as the contemporary Shāfi'i-Ash'ari scholar of Jordan, Ḥasan al-Saqqāf in *Ṣaḥīḥ sharḥ al-'aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*, pp. 560-561.

allows you behold God's description of His prophet as he who *does not speak of his own desire*" (Q, 53:3) (*wa-mā yanṭiqu 'an al-hawā*).⁶

Contextualizing the *Irshād*

Key passages from the introductory preface and first chapter of the *Irshād* have survived in the writings of the prolific Māmlūk scholar Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1391). His monumental work, entitled "The Demonstration of the Sciences of the Qur'ān" (*al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-qur'ān*), was the first all-inclusive medieval synthesis of Qur'ānic sciences ever written in medieval Islam. It laid the foundations for Suyūṭī's (d. 910/1505) famous work "The Perfection of the Sciences of the Qur'ān" (*al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-qur'ān*), which eventually eclipsed the *Burhān*. The forty-seven chapters of the *Burhān* treat various topics pertaining to the Qur'ān, including causal circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), legal verses, inimitability of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz*), orthography, and the observance of courtesies during recitation of the Holy Book. In his discussions of these major themes, Zarkashī often assesses opinions of Ḥadīth scholars, theologians, exegetes, and grammarians side by side.⁷ In his fortieth chapter he discusses a theme that is commonly found in Ḥadīth and uṣūl discussions, namely the concordance between the Sunna and the Qur'ān (*mu'ādadat al-sunna wa-l-qur'ān*). In this chapter, which spans a mere fifteen pages, Zarkashī adopts Ibn Barraĵān's position wholesale and lifts illustrative excerpts from the *Irshād*.

In another work,⁸ Zarkashī explains that the *Irshād* is part of a broader longstanding uṣūlī discussion over the rationale behind the binding legal status of the Prophet's Sunna: his actions, sayings, and tacit approvals. Sunnī jurists busy themselves with the extraction of legal injunctions from the Ḥadīth on the assumption that the Sunna is legally binding because God Himself vested Muḥammad with authority and commanded believers to emulate him in the Qur'ān. After all, God states: *Say* [Oh Muḥammad]: *'If you love God, then follow me, and God will love you'* (Q 3:31). But uṣūlīs pushed the debate further and ask: how exactly does the divine Word validate prophetic custom? Is the Qur'ānic validation of the Sunna evident and binding for every single prophetic practice? Does every Sunna need to be validated Qur'ānically in order for it to be legally binding? To answer these complicated questions, theorizing uṣūlīs first examined specific cases of

⁶ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, pp. 31–33, nr. 45. ⁷ *EP*², "al-Zarkashī," (Rippin).

⁸ See Zarkashī's monumental work on uṣūl entitled *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*.

concordance between the Sunna and the Qur'ān (*mu'ādadat al-sunna li-l-qur'ān*). The great legal thinker Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), who was one of the earliest codifiers of the concept of Sunna, discerned between three categories of Sunna in relation to the divine Word: (1) a Sunna which is explicitly sanctioned by the Qur'ān and elucidated verbally or behaviorally by the Prophet; (2) a Sunna which is only implicitly sanctioned by the Qur'ān and elucidated verbally or behaviorally by the Prophet; (3) a Sunna performed by the Prophet which has no detectable Qur'ānic validation.⁹

While both jurists and uṣūlīs are in agreement that even Qur'ānically unvalidated prophetic practices carry juridical weight, uṣūlīs split into two camps as to the rationale behind this precept. The first uṣūl camp, which Ibn Barraġān opposes, holds that God commanded believers to obey His Messenger because He possessed foreknowledge of Muḥammad's rightful conduct. Therefore, it is God who bestowed Muḥammad with the freedom to institute a Sunna, and no explicit Qur'ānic foundation is necessary for every Sunna in order for it to be binding. While this argument secures the divinely vested legal authority of the Sunna, it is also problematic. For it concedes that not every Sunna is Qur'ānically validated, and therefore implies that the Qur'ān does not encompass knowledge of all things, since only a select number of prophetic practices are sanctioned Qur'ānically. In other words, this uṣūlī argument contradicts the doctrine of the all-comprehensive Qur'ān, and flatly goes against the verse which states that *We have neglected nothing from the Book* (6:38). Hence, the second uṣūlī camp emerged in opposition to the first. This second position rejects the concession that not every Sunna is Qur'ānically substantiated. These uṣūlīs contend that every prophetic practice *a priori* is rooted in the Holy Book, since the latter contains all knowledge.

It is to this group that Ibn Barraġān not only adhered, but also became the most outspoken and iconic champion. His *Irshād* was written as a defense of this uṣūlī position. In Zarkashī's words, he "categorically asserted and built his work *al-Irshād* upon this position, giving detailed justifications for it [therein]."¹⁰

Excerpt of the *Irshād* from Zarkashī

Zarkashī opens his discussion of Qur'ān-Sunna concordance with the following categorical assertion quoted from the *Irshād*:

⁹ See El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law*.

¹⁰ See *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, IV, pp. 165–166, under *Mabāḥith al-sunna, mas'alat al-sunan 'indal-Shāfi'ī thalāth aqsām*.

Every Prophetic utterance is [contained] in the Qur'ān, or its root [lies therein], however closely or remotely [this may seem], and regardless of whether one comprehends [this truth] or is blind of it; for *we have neglected nothing from the Book* (6:38).¹¹

The *Irshād* presupposes that the Prophet embodied the Word of God and acted in complete accordance with it. His utterances necessarily have a Qur'ānic origin, and are equally binding as the divine Word, since God commands believers to *obey God and His Messenger* (Q 3:32). The purpose of the *Irshād* is therefore not only to establish the Qur'ānic basis for the aḥādīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, but also to lay down a methodology to approach the broader Ḥadīth corpus. In contrast to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), who authenticated the Ḥadīth reports and chains of transmission of Mālik's *Muwatta'* in a work entitled "Introducing the Meanings and Chains of Transmission of the *Muwatta'*" (*al-Tambīd li-mā fī al-Muwatta' min al-ma'ānī wa-l-asānīd*), Ibn Barraġān proclaims that all Ḥadīth, whether weak or strong, are to be assessed in light of their Qur'ānic roots, not their chains of transmission. Those aḥādīth which are supported by the Qur'ān are to be accepted as authentic and to be absorbed into the tradition, whether they be strong, weak, or even fabricated. Similarly, those aḥādīth which do not accord with the Qur'ān are to be rejected regardless of their authenticity. The *Irshād* was thus written with a view to opening religious discourse to the broader body of Ḥadīth literature. It may be seen as a follow up to Imām al-Shafī'ī's absorption of the Sunna into legal discourse. Ibn Barraġān's *Irshād* sought to elevate the Ḥadīth corpus and Sunna to the status of a minor revelation which illuminates, supplements, but never contradicts the Qur'ān. His use of Ḥadīth in his tafsīrs (see below) dovetails with his Ḥadīth theory in the *Irshād*.

The *Irshād* is thus not just a defense of Ḥadīth, but also a defense of the dogma of Qur'ānic inimitability (*mu'jiz*). The Holy Book, according to Ibn Barraġān, encompasses knowledge of not only the Ḥadīth but all things past, present and future. It is the source and litmus test of all knowledge. This knowledge, he argues in later works, can be accessed by the mystics.

Yet despite the mystical undertones, it would appear that the *Irshād* stands somewhat out of pattern with Ibn Barraġān's later, more esoteric works. Whereas the latter feature a pronounced usage of Ḥadīth and Qur'ān as vehicles for mystical contemplation and for beholding the

¹¹ Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-qur'ān*, II, p. 129.

forms of the Hereafter, in the *Irshād* he is an avid Ḥadīth expert who demonstrates his status as a muḥaddith and an uṣūlī. Ibn Barraġān's thesis in the *Irshād*, moreover, did not leave much of an impression on Sufi literature. It did, however, impact uṣūlīs, exegetes, and Ḥadīth scholars and came to be regarded as the capstone in the longstanding uṣūlī debate over the concordance of Qur'ān and Sunna (*mu'āḍadat al-qur'ān wa-l-sunna*).

Zarkashī reproduced several pages from the *Irshād* to demonstrate Ibn Barraġān's thesis of the Qur'ān's concordance with the Ḥadīth.¹² Ibn Barraġān's command of Ḥadīth is evident in this work, but the flow of his writing is choppy on account of its technical content and the endless references to Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. What follows is a translation of Zarkashī's redaction of the *Irshād*'s introduction, where he cites a series of Ḥadīth-Qur'ān concordance examples to prove his central thesis:

Are you not aware that the Prophet said in the ḥadīth of stoning (*al-rajm*): “Verily, I shall judge between you by the Book of God.” [Although stoning] is not explicitly stated (*naṣṣ*) in the Book of God, the Prophet vowed to judge by the Book of God [and decreed that the adulteress be stoned].

Stoning is implicitly contained in (*ta'rīd mujmal*) the verse *it shall avert from her the punishment* (24:8).¹³ The specific [decree] of stoning therefore comes from the general [Qur'ānic prescription] *the punishment*. This general verse is made clear by the Prophet's ruling and by his command [to enact the punishment]. [The interpretation of this general verse] is also contained in the comprehensive [command] *Whatever the Messenger gives you, take; whatever he forbids you, give over* (59:7) and *Whosoever obeys the Messenger, thereby obeys God* (4:80). The same applies to all of the Prophet's decrees and rulings.

But the learner only perceives this [knowledge of concordance] in proportion to his degree of exertion, devoted capacity, and measure of understanding. Whoever seeks this knowledge attains only what God aids him in attaining, for He is the Bestower of blessings. This insight [into the concordance between Qur'ān and Ḥadīth] is an elevated knowledge, a great source of certainty.

The Prophet alerted us to [this concordance] in many of his addresses:

“For instance, when [Muḥammad] mentioned what is in store for saints in paradise, he said ‘in it is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has it occurred to a human heart, save that with which I have acquainted them.’ Then the Prophet

¹² Zarkashī, *Burhān*, II, pp. 129–145.

¹³ In reference to the Qur'ānic passage: *And those who cast it up on their wives having no witnesses except themselves, the testimony of one of them shall be to testify by God four times that he is of the truthful, and a fifth time, that the curse of God shall be upon him, if he should be of the liars. It shall avert from her the chastisement if she testify by God four times that he is of the liars, and a fifth time, that the wrath of God shall be upon her, if he should be of the truthful.* (Q. 24:6–9 Arberry)

said: ‘if you wish you may recite *No soul knows what comfort is laid up for them secretly* (32:17).’”

In another ḥadīth, the Companions asked “shall we not simply trust in God and forsake our deeds?” and the Prophet responded: “perform good works, for each of you is disposed to what he was created for (*kullun muyassarun li-mā khuliqa lahu*).” Then the Prophet recited: “*As for him who gives and is godfearing and confirms the reward most fair, We shall surely ease him to the Easing. But as for him who is a miser, and self-sufficient, and cries lies to the reward most fair, We shall surely ease him to the Hardship*” (92:5–10).

The Prophet described paradise as follows: “verily in it is a tree under whose shade a rider journeys one hundred years without reaching its end.” Then he said: “you may recite *and shade extended*” (56:30).

Thus the Prophet himself taught his Companions the concordance between Ḥadīth and the Qur’ān, and he alerted them to the Qur’ānic validations of his Ḥadīth, so that scholars from his community (*umma*) may extract ḥadīthī meanings from the Qur’ān, that they may find certitude . . . and ascend in ranks (*li-yartaqū fī al-asbāb*).

The *Irshād’s* introduction ends here, according to Zarkashī. Ibn Barrajan generally follows the layout of Ḥadīth in Muslim’s collection, though he skips over certain closely worded reports and includes reports not in Muslim. For instance, the “ḥadīth of stoning” is from the *Muwatta’*, while the famous “ḥadīth of intention” below is taken from Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*:

Verily actions are judged according to intention, and every person will earn what he intended. So whoever’s emigration was to God and His Messenger, then his emigration is to God and His Messenger. And whoever’s emigration is toward a worldly attainment or a woman he may marry, then his emigration will be for what he emigrated towards. (*innamā al-a’ māl bi-l-niyāt . . .*)

Ibn Barrajan states that the ḥadīth is explicitly mentioned in the following passage:

Whosoever desires this hasty world, We hasten for him therein what We will unto whomsoever We desire; then We appoint for him Hellfire wherein he shall roast, condemned and rejected. And whosoever desires the world to come and strives after it as he should, being a believer – those, their striving shall be thanked. (17:18–19)

Then Ibn Barrajan explains that the verse:

Those who take unbelievers for their friends instead of believers—do they seek glory in them? But glory altogether belongs to God (4:139)

Points to verse:

Whosoever desires glory, the glory altogether belongs to God. To Him good words go up, and the righteous deed—He uplifts it; but those who devise evil

deeds—theirs shall be a terrible chastisement, and their devising shall come to naught (35:10).

II SHARḤ ASMĀ' ALLĀH AL-ḤUSNĀ

Ibn Barraĵān wrote the *Irshād* early in his career as an up-and-coming Sevillian muḥaddith. As he approached middle age (roughly 40), it seems that he began more actively to wed his versatile educational training to a unique and elaborate mystical worldview centered on *i'tibār*, the contemplative “crossing from the visible to the unseen world” (*al-'ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghā'ib*, discussed in Chapter 8). This “second stage” of his scholarly output may indicate an inner conversion and the practice of *dhikr*, invoking the name of God in prayer. It is likely that the *Sharḥ* was the first major work that Ibn Barraĵān penned when he retreated to the backlands of Seville in his mid-forties between 490 and 495/1096 and 1102. Thus his authorial transition from muḥaddith to mu'tabir (lit. “Contemplator” or “Practitioner of the *'Ibra*”) during his late-thirties to early-forties is marked by his completion of this mystically mature “Commentary on the Beautiful Names,” (*Sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*).

This seminal work, which became another foundation for his fame as a scholar, spans approximately 350 folios, or 700 pages in the modern printed edition of Mazyadī. He cites the *Irshād* several times in the *Sharḥ*.¹⁴ Moreover, the *Sharḥ* was written well before his coming into contact with Ghazālī's *Maqṣad*, which was introduced into al-Andalus in 495/1102 by Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (see below).

Many manuscript copies of the *Sharḥ* are known to exist under the titles *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, or *Sharḥ ma'ānī asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, or even *Tarjumān lisān al-ḥaqq al-mabthūth fī al-amr wa-l-khalq*, standing as testimony to the fame of this work.¹⁵ In his later writings, Ibn Barraĵān

¹⁴ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 255; II, pp. 275, 324–325.

¹⁵ Istanbul, MS Topkapı Ahmet III 1495 (257 ff.; 595 h); Istanbul, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 426 (221 ff.; 598 h); Istanbul, MS Ayasofya 1869 (242 ff.; 608 h); Konya, MS Yusuf Ağa 5084 (383 ff.; 667 h); Istanbul, MS Atif Efendi 1525 (230 ff.; 709 h); London, MS Brit. Museum 1612 (157 ff.; 709 h); Medina, MS 'Ārif Ḥikmat 35 (270 ff.; 716 h); Istanbul, MS Topkapı Ahmet III 1591 (349 ff.; 728 h); Istanbul, MS Nuruosmaniye 2876 (238ff; 726 h); Istanbul, MS Nuruosmaniye 2877 (237 ff.; 733 h); Istanbul, MS Çarullah 1023 (235 ff.; 795 h); Cairo, MS Tal'at 1502 (237 ff.; 8th ca. h?); Istanbul, MS Fatih 766 (283 ff.; 879 h); Istanbul, MS Laleli 1551 (198 ff.; 933 h); MS Istanbul Univ. 2484 (311 ff.; 949 h); MS Berlin 2221 (82 ff.; 934 h); Mulakhkhaş, compiled by 'Abd al-Qādir b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī; Turkey, Antalya Province, MS Elmalı 2484 (310 ff.; 958 h); MS

refers to his commentary as *Sharḥ al-asmā'*, so I take the latter to be the authentic title for his commentary on the names, instead of *Tarjumān lisān al-ḥaqq*.

According to the earliest biographer Ibn al-Abbār, the *Sharḥ* was transmitted by Ibn Barraḡān's students Abū al-Qāsim al-Qanṭarī, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī, Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Khalīl, and others in Marrakesh and presumably to members of the circle of Abū Madyan. From there, it gradually spread into the Mashriq, and gained widespread renown among Mamlūk Egyptians and Ottoman scholars in Turkey.

The first critical edition of the *Sharḥ* was published by Purificación de la Torre as a PhD dissertation at the University Complutense of Madrid (1996), under M.J. Viguera's direction. This pioneering text includes a very useful introductory study of Ibn Barraḡān's biography and a near-comprehensive manuscript survey. Regrettably, the edition relies heavily on a faulty manuscript, Ahmet III 1591 (written in 728/1327), instead of the more reliable Atif Efendi 1525 (written in 709/1309), which the editor was unable to obtain.¹⁶ The edition is also hindered by grammatical and editorial mistakes, and a small font.¹⁷ A second edition of the *Sharḥ* was brought out in a two-volume publication in Beirut by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya in 2010. Its editor is a well-known Cairene Azharī Shaykh, Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazyadī, who is a professional and prolific editor with dozens of publications to his name, including major Sufi works as well as edited tracts of theology and creed. Unfortunately, Mazyadī's introduction is very thinly researched, his introductory commentary on the divine names is lifted from de La Torre's Spanish introduction which he does not cite, and his edition relies only on one MS, namely 'Ārif Hikmat 35 (270 ff.; 716 h). Nonetheless, his edition is more reliable and readable than de La Torre's, although it too is not free of typographical errors.

The *Sharḥ* is, as Ibn al-Zubayr states, one of the most renowned (*shahīr*) Sufī treatments of the names. The *Sharḥ's* abridgement¹⁸ and

Paris 2642 (276 ff; 984 h); Tunis, MS Bibliothèque Nationale 07651 (165 ff; n/d); Tunis, MS Bibliothèque Nationale 03547 (170 ff; n/d).

¹⁶ See ed. P. de la Torre's introduction, *Ṣarḥ*, p. 70.

¹⁷ See pp. 463–470 of Casewit, "The Forgotten Mystic," for a collation of pages 230–232 and 240–245 of de la Torre's edition against two MS versions pertaining to disparate families.

¹⁸ An abridgement of the *Sharḥ* was written by 'Abd al-Qādir b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī al-Shāfi'ī in 934/1528 entitled *Mulakhkhaṣ min kitāb sharḥ ma'ānī asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā wa-tafsīrūhā wa-l-i'tibār min kitāb Allāh wa-l-irshād ilā al-ta'abbud bi-ma'ānībā wa-a'māl al-nufūs bi-muqtaḍāhā* (MS 2221, Berlin). In it, al-Maqdisī presents only Ibn Barraḡān's *ta'abbud* passages for the names (ed. de La Torre, *Ṣarḥ*, p. 41).

references to it in works of later authors and its numerous manuscript renditions in libraries across the Muslim world stand as testament to its enduring fame and influence. Although preceded by earlier Andalusī and Eastern commentaries,¹⁹ and by the Sufi *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* of Qushayrī,²⁰ Ibn Barraĵān's is a trailblazing work. It informed and influenced the works of scholars across ages and disciplines, including exegetes such as Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273),²¹ Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344),²² Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480),²³ and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr (d. 1393/1972),²⁴ as well as followers of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 637/1240) such as 'Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291),²⁵ and theologians such as Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) and Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328).²⁶ As well, a number of Sufis and scholars took inspiration from this work – Abū al-'Abbās al-Uqlīshī (d. 549/1154),²⁷ Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148),²⁸ and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 637/1240)²⁹ – relying on it as stimulus to pen their own treatises on the names.³⁰

¹⁹ For a brief treatment of works by Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn al-'Arabī, al-Qushayrī and others, see ed. de La Torre's introduction to the *Šarḥ*, pp. 26–28.

²⁰ Qushayrī's *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* was edited and printed in Cairo, 1970.

²¹ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-qur'ān*, VII, p. 327.

²² Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, V, p. 231.

²³ Biqā'ī's citations of Ibn Barraĵān in his 22 volume *Nazm al-durar* are too numerous to count. He begins to cite our author's *Tanbīh* and *Sharḥ al-asmā'* from sūra 30 onward, which indicates that Biqā'ī first took an interest in Ibn Barraĵān after reading his Jerusalem prediction. e.g., XXII, p. 371.

²⁴ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tabrīr wa-l-tanwīr*, IX, p. 188; XVIII, pp. 192-193, 232; XXVIII, p. 354; XXX, p. 615.

²⁵ 'Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) authored a commentary on the divine names in which he engages the works of Bayhaqī, Ghazālī, and Ibn Barraĵān. Cf. two MSS in Istanbul (Beyazit 8011, Laleli 1556), and one in Lucknow, India (H. L. 2579). See my forthcoming critical edition and translation, tentatively entitled *In the Names of God*.

²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *K. al-Šafadiyya*, II, pp. 337–339.

²⁷ Uqlīshī's work is entitled *al-Inbā' fī sharḥ ḥaqā'iq al-šifāt wa-l-asmā'* (Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, pp. 361, 370; *S. I*, p. 633).

²⁸ Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Amad al-aqṣā fī sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*.

²⁹ For Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī's treatment of the names, see his *El secreto de los nombres de Dios*, ed. P. Beneito. Like Ibn Barraĵān's *Sharḥ*, the divine names in Ibn al-'Arabī's commentary receive a tripartite commentary (*ta'alluq, taḥaqquq, takhalluq*). In contrast to Ibn Barraĵān, Ibn al-'Arabī's commentary does not begin with a philological analysis of the names. However, Ibn al-'Arabī's *taḥaqquq* and *takhalluq* seem to be modeled after Ibn Barraĵān's *i'tibār* and *ta'abbud* respectively (see below on the structure of Ibn Barraĵān's *Sharḥ*).

³⁰ See de La Torre's introduction to Ibn Barraĵān's *Šarḥ*, pp. 27–28.

Ibn Barrajan purportedly penned his *Sharḥ* in response to a question posed to him by a friend about the meaning of the famous ḥadīth of the Prophet, which is narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayra:

Verily, God has ninety-nine Names, one hundred minus one, he who reckons [*abṣāḥā*] them enters paradise.³¹

The inquirer, described as a “beloved friend, a pure and intimate brother (*al-walī al-ḥabīb, al-akḥkḥ al-muṣāfā al-qarīb*),”³² was probably his disciple (*tālib*).³³ Despite the intimacy of its origins, however, the *Sharḥ* was intended to be diffused to a wider audience in al-Andalus. Rather than addressing his reader (*qārīʾ*), Ibn Barrajan directs his words toward the “listener of his book” (*sāmiʾ taṣnīfinā ḥādhā*),³⁴ signaling that the *Sharḥ* was intended to be delivered orally before an audience of listeners. With this oral delivery in mind, he attempts a balance between scholarly erudition and mainstream accessibility, and his listeners would have consisted of both erudites and pious laymen. Ibn Barrajan intentionally switches registers throughout the text to target different addressees. From one page to the next, he oscillates between the prolix and admonitory tone of a preacher, to the flowery rhyming prose (*sajʿ*) of a belletrist, and densely metaphysical expositions of a theologian, or free flowing reflections of a Muʿtabir.

Despite its eclectic range of registers, the *Sharḥ* as a whole can be regarded as more theological than his other works, since it contains extensive discussions on subjects such as the beatific vision (*ruʾya*), determinism and free will, or the relation between the Essence and the names of God. Yet the *Sharḥ* is neither a polemical nor an argumentative treatment of the names, and dialectical *kalāmī* contentions along the lines of “if-it-is-said, then-I-say” (*in qīla qultu*) are rare.³⁵

The *Sharḥ*’s characteristic eclecticism reflects Ibn Barrajan’s expertise in multiple fields, and a natural ability to move between disciplines, synthesizing disparate bodies of knowledge and drawing his listeners into his cosmological worldview. Notwithstanding the fact that his central concerns and points of emphasis differ from work to work,³⁶ and that

³¹ Bukhārī, #6410, #7390; Muslim, #2677. Ibn Barrajan explains that the divine names included in the *sharḥ* are derived from Qurʾān and ḥadīth (*ishṭiqāq*), yet he exceeds 99 so as to ensure the recompense of paradise promised by the Prophet. Although he could have dwelled on other names, our author claims to have “restricted” himself to 145 with a view to brevity (*Sharḥ*, I, ed. Mazyadī, pp. 27–29).

³² Ibid., I, p. 26. ³³ He is addressed as such in Ibid., II, p. 220. ³⁴ Ibid., I, p. 358.

³⁵ E.g., Ibid., I, p. 94.

³⁶ For instance, the doctrine of the Two Breaths (*fayḥayn*) is much less prominent in the *Sharḥ* than in his later works, especially the *Īdāḥ*, where it assumes a central function in

some finer doctrinal points become highlighted later on in the tafsīrs, all of the central doctrines of Ibn Barraġān's writings are already present in this work. Moreover, the *Sharḥ* is no less esoteric and mystical in flavor than the *Īdāḥ*. But unlike the amorphous *Īdāḥ* which was orally transcribed by a professional scribe, the *Sharḥ* is Ibn Barraġān's most structured and coherent work, featuring meticulous cross-references,³⁷ and intended to be read out chronologically from beginning to end.³⁸ There are no indications that the *Sharḥ* was compiled on the basis of oral transcriptions of a lecture series.

Deliberately prearranged, and written on the basis of a detailed outline, the *Sharḥ* teases out a number of thematic topics relevant to every divine name. For instance, he explicates the names of divine power (*al-Qadīr*, *al-Qādir*, *al-Muqtadir*, *al-Qawī*) for discussions of predestination, free will, and acquisition (*kasb*), whereas the name *al-Shahīd*, "the Witness," is used as the basis for a lengthy treatment of the fundamental articles of faith which believers must bear witness to.³⁹

The author insists repeatedly that his work is intended to be short and concise,⁴⁰ but in this respect he fails miserably since his is probably the longest book of its kind in medieval Islam, spanning over 700 pages in print and only matched in length by Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Būnī's (d. 622/1225) commentary.⁴¹ The prolixity of the *Sharḥ* is partly due to Ibn Barraġān's tendency to digress on lengthy tangents. These detours are often cut short by remarks such as, "let us return to what we initially intended to say," after which he veers back to an originally proposed topic of discussion.⁴²

One of the striking features of the *Sharḥ* is that Ibn Barraġān comments not on the standard list of 99 names listed in a variety ḥadīth reports, but on 132. To be sure, this long list is not the result of a Mu'tazilī attempt at deducing, or "extracting" (*ishtiqāq*) divine names on the basis of rational

capturing the ontological continuity between the transcendent divine principle and created manifestation. As well, certain Qur'ānic verses and ḥadīth reports become more emphasized later in his writings. In the *Īdāḥ*, the "Ḥadīth of the Two Handfuls" (*qabḍatayn*) becomes central to his discussion of God's omnipotence. God grasps the souls of humanity in two handfuls and proclaims: "This group to Hell, and the deeds of the people of Hell they shall perform; and this group to Heaven, and the deeds of the people of Heaven they shall perform; and I do not care!" (*hā'ulā'ī li-l-nār wa-bi'amal ahl al-nār ya'malūn. . . wa-lā ubālī*). Ibn Ḥanbal, #17660; Ibn Ḥibbān, #338.

³⁷ Ibn Barraġān cross-references his work, referring readers to similar or more extensive discussions of a given theme. See *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyādī, I, p. 234; II, p. 166.

³⁸ Ibn Barraġān often remarks that "we have previously said so-and-so, and we shall return to this in a later discussion under divine name x." (E.g., *Ibid.*, I, p. 105.)

³⁹ See respectively, *Ibid.*, II, pp. 143–155, and 1–117. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 275.

⁴¹ Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, II, pp. 1031–1033. ⁴² *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyādī, II, p. 40.

speculation. In true Ash'arī vein, Ibn Barrajan privileges God's Self-naming. He did not come up with nonconventional divine names on the basis of what his intellect ('*aql*) deemed to be suitable designations of God. Rather, Ibn Barrajan names God by demonstrating the Qur'ānic or Ḥadīth origin of each name. In so doing, he was consciously attempting to broaden Ash'arī discourse on the divine names while adhering to its tenet *tawqīf*, to "establish" or anchor each name in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.⁴³ For the most part, this exercise in excavating names from scripture, which is reminiscent of his Qur'ān-centered approach to weak Ḥadīth in the *Irshād*, was positively received by his contemporaries. It even launched a new trend in the Andalusī divine names tradition. For instance, we know that the *Sharḥ* inspired the Ash'arī theologian Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) to propose his own list of names in a work which included unusual names such as "Fourth Among Three" (*rābi' thalātha*), "Sixth Among Five" (*sādis khamsa*), and "Teacher" (*mu'allim*).⁴⁴

Objections to Ibn Barrajan's novel method were voiced however by scholars such as the Granadan Ḥadīth expert Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 598/1201), who accused him of mentioning names with no Qur'ānic or ḥadīth precedent – the very charge of Mu'tazilism he wished to avoid. In fact, about one century later, the polemic over Ibn Barrajan's method of drawing divine names had not subsided. Thus Qurtubī (d. 671/1273), a great admirer of Ibn Barrajan, defended the *Sharḥ* and boasted his own new list of 200 names in a commentary entitled "The Sublime Commentary on the Beautiful Names" (*al-Asnā fī sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*).⁴⁵ Thus the *Sharḥ* was a watershed moment for this genre of writings that instigated a scholarly approach to the names in al-Andalus.

Ibn Barrajan's Interpretive Approach to the Divine Names

The *Sharḥ* opens with a carefully redacted fifteen-page introductory discussion of the author's mode of approach to the divine names. The author

⁴³ Gimaret, *Les noms divins*, pp. 55–60, 67.

⁴⁴ Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Amad al-aqṣā fī sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*. See Ibn 'Āshūr's discussion in *al-Tabrīr wa-l-tanwīr*, IX, p. 188. The Granadan ḥadīth expert Abū Ja'far b. al-Ḥaṣṣār al-Qaysī b. al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 598/1201) criticizes Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī for following Ibn Barrajan's approach of "extracting" (*ishtiqāq*) numerous unfamiliar names of God from scripture. Qurtubī, a staunch defender of Ibn Barrajan, contends that the both scholars were drawing names from Qur'ānic and ḥadīth sources. (Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-abkām al-qur'ān*, VII, p. 327.)

⁴⁵ Qurtubī's *al-Asnā* was first published in Egypt (1995). See also Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-abkām al-qur'ān*, VII, p. 327.

begins by explaining what the Prophet meant when he said that “reckoning” (*iḥṣāʾ*) the names begets paradise. Reckoning, he explains in his introduction, is a seven-fold process:

- (1) Deriving the linguistic meanings of the names.
- (2) Discerning between the particular linguistic and theological connotations of each name.
- (3) Identifying the names’ connections to the “exalted attributes” (*al-ṣifāt al-ʿulā*) – i.e., Essential attributes of Ashʿarism – namely lordship (*ilāhiyya*), oneness (*waḥda*), life (*ḥayāt*), knowledge (*ʿilm*), power (*qudra*), volition (*irāda*), and dominion (*mulk*). For instance, to oneness belong names such as the One (*Wāḥid*), Solitary (*Fard*), Odd (*Witr*), Everlasting Refuge (*Ṣamad*).
- (4) Reckoning the meanings and traces (*āthār*) of the divine names in the universe.
- (5) Practicing servanthood (*taʿabbud*) with respect to each name.
- (6) Putting the sum knowledge of the names into practice by disciplining the soul and clinging to the commands and prohibitions of the Qurʾān and the Sunna.
- (7) At the seventh reckoning, Ibn Barraġān pauses. He submits that the very act of demonstrating God’s presence by searching for His traces in the cosmos presupposes a degree of incertitude and impiety on the part of the seeker. For those who truly possess knowledge of God are in no need of a blueprint of His names and attributes. Theirs is an immediate knowledge and a conviction which is not dependent on *re*-membrance and *re*-collection. As the Qurʾān puts it, they are *those unto whom We have given the Book [and who] recognize it just as they recognize their sons* (2:146). Ibn Barraġān concedes that attaining to this station of love (*maqām al-maḥabba*) is the ultimate way of “reckoning the names” (*iḥṣāʾ al-asmāʾ*), since theoretical knowledge comes to a halt, and divine love takes full possession of the soul so that it recognizes its Lord spontaneously and directly.

Ibn Barraġān’s introduction also debates such questions as: What are the origins of the divine names? What does it mean to assign a name (*tasmiya*) to a thing (*shayʾ*)? And is a name related to the reality that it designates? He posits four categories of identity relationships:

- (1) A surname or title (*laqab*) which designates an object or a living creature such as “bird” or “mountain.”

- (2) A designation that relates to a specific circumstance or mood, and serves to distinguish between things and to facilitate communication. Words such as “goodness” and “success” fall under this second category. Unlike the divine names, these appellations do not relate ontologically to the actual reality of the named thing. The Qurʾānic verse *These are nothing but names which you have named – you and your forefathers – for which God has bestowed no warrant from on high* (Q. 53:23) describe such designations.
- (3) Names which are attributes that correspond to or contradict the reality that they designate. For instance, the Prophet’s names and titles, including “the praised one” (*Muḥammad*) or the “beloved of God” (*ḥabīb Allāh*) correspond exactly to the elevated spiritual station of the Prophet. Similarly, the Qurʾān states “O *Zachariah!* We bring you the glad tiding of [the birth of] a son whose name shall be John (*Yaḥyā*). [And God says,] ‘Never have We given this name to anyone before him’ (19:7)., The prophet Yaḥyā, explains Ibn Barrajān, lived up to his name (lit. *yaḥyā* “he lives”) and died in a state of belief, free from sin, and thus the name and the reality of the named are in agreement.⁴⁶
- (4) Unlike all other designations, the divine names belong to a higher ontological plane. They are not extracted from language, but language is extracted from them (more on this below). Moreover, they are divided into various subcategories. There are names of divine acts (*asmāʾ fiʾl*) such as Creator, Reviver, and Giver of Death. There are also names which indicate the divine Essence and divine acts (*dhāt wa-fiʾl*), which Ibn Barrajān does not expound upon in the introduction. Still others indicate Essence and attribute (*ism dhāt wa-ṣifa*), such as the Living, the Everlasting, and the Merciful, and some point to both Essence and meaning (*dhāt wa-maʾnā*) from the viewpoint of earthly creation, such as the Worshipped One (*maʾbūd*). There are also “names” which allude to God, such as “He is That” (*huwa dhāk*). Additionally, there are esoteric names designated by individual sacred letters such as Alif, Hāʾ, Nūn, or Bāʾ which are known innately through man’s primordial nature (*fiṭra*). At the highest level, where faith is coupled with knowledge and understanding, the mystic realizes that the name and the Named are mysteriously identical.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Sharḥ*, ed. de La Torre, pp. 9–10. See Kukkonen, “al-Ghazālī on the Signification of Names,” pp. 69–74 for an analysis of this topic in Ghazālī’s *Maqṣad*.

⁴⁷ *Sharḥ*, ed. de La Torre, pp. 10–12.

Organizational Structure of the *Sharḥ*

Ibn Barraġān roughly arranges the names according to the seven essential attributes of Ash'arism, namely lordship, unity, life, knowledge, power, will, and dominion. Moreover each of the seven groups are further sub-grouped around a particular theme. For instance, under names of lordship he groups those closest to the divine Essence (*dhāt*), such as Allāh, Deity (*Ilāh*), One (*Wāḥid*), He (Huwa); then names of Essence which convey an attribute, such as Living (Ḥayy), Real (Ḥaqq), Clarifier (*Mubīn*); then names denoting divine eternity (*qidam*) such as Abiding (*Bāqī*), Everlasting (*Dā'im*); then names of majesty such as Great (*Kabīr*), Exalter ('*Alī*), Magnificent ('*Aẓīm*), and Majestic (*Jalīl*), and so forth. Also, he pairs up correlative names such as Withholder (*Qābiḍ*) and Outspreader (*Bāsīt*), or Abaser (*Mudhill*) and Exalter (*Mu'izz*), under the same headings since, as Ibn Barraġān remarks, one cannot be understood without the other.⁴⁸

1 *Lexical analysis* (takhrij lughawī)

In effect, the *Sharḥ* amounts to three separate levels of commentary on the divine names, since each name receives three distinct commentaries (*fuṣūl*). The first is a lexical analysis (*istikhrāj lughawī*), the second doctrinal (*i'tibār*), and the third devotional (*ta'abbud*). This tripartite organizational pattern partly informs the structure of his two Qur'ān commentaries as well, which are divided under similar headings. The first linguistic analysis consists of an exposition of the name's different shades of meaning in light of Qur'ānic, Ḥadīth, poetic, literary, and lexicographic sources at his disposal.⁴⁹ Ibn Barraġān's mastery of the Arabic language shines forth here, and the *Sharḥ* was treasured by philologists as a mine for linguistic excavations. Notably, one of his obscure definitions under the name *al-'Azīz* caught the eye of the celebrated Cairene lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. ca. 712/1312), who cites Ibn Barraġān's definition under the entry 'Z-Z of *Lisān al-'arab*.

2 *Contemplative crossing* (i'tibār)

Having mapped out different linguistic possibilities, Ibn Barraġān proceeds to look at the name through a theological lens. Typically he affirms that every connoted meaning can be applied to God. For instance, *al-Jalīl*

⁴⁸ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 205, 213.

⁴⁹ See *Sharḥ*, ed. De la Torre, pp. 39–42 for further details on the *istikhrāj lughawī* sections.

encompasses exaltedness (*ʿulū*), outwardness (*ḡubūr*), self-greatness (*kibr*), magnificence (*ʿizam*), and preeminence (*khayrūra*), which are all admissible designations for God as understood by Ashʿarism.⁵⁰ However, certain names such as *al-Matīn* (the Firm) have corporeal or anthropomorphic implications, for example “solidness” (*ṣalāba*) and “coming together of disparate parts” (*ijtimāʾ al-abʿād*), which are not theologically tenable.⁵¹ Generally Ibn Barraḡān tenders a middle-of-the-road theological solution to the problem of balance between transcendence and immanence. He reasons that God is at once the utterly transcendent, other, and unique, while also being comparable and describable by various names appearing throughout the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. If God were only absolutely transcendent, then He would be unknowable. If considered as totally immanent, then one risks opening the door to anthropomorphism. While the Muʿtazila emphasized incomparability (*tanẓīh*) to the point of deeming anthropomorphic descriptions of God (His hand, face, etc.) incomprehensible (*taʿtīl*), literalists took affirmations of similarity too literally and fell into the trap of anthropomorphism.⁵² By positioning himself as a straddler between these two extremes, Ibn Barraḡān adopts the Ashʿarī camp.

Ibn Barraḡān can be called an Ashʿarī insofar as his writings endorse an Ashʿarī stance – which he simply refers to as “Sunni” – on most of the classical Islamic theological debates, including the relationship between the divine attributes and the Essence, and free will versus predestination.⁵³ However, while Ashʿarism formed part and parcel of his educational formation and writings, it was secondary to his scholarly project as a whole. His theological discussions tend to be brief, and his allegiance to Ashʿarism is not always wholehearted. For instance, he is not fully persuaded by the doctrine of “without how” (*bilā kayf*),⁵⁴ and his notion of *iʿtibār* rests on the idea of transforming the abstract articles of belief articulated by Ashʿarī theologians into actualized spiritual realities which are beheld directly in this life. In his words, *iʿtibār* is not a conventional articulation of creed, but a “quest for the realities of belief” (*ṭalab ḥaqāʾiq*

⁵⁰ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 171, 237; see also II, p. 249. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 155.

⁵² See *Ibid.*, II, p. 433 for an attack on the literalists and Muʿtazilī doctrine.

⁵³ On the relationship between the divine attributes and the Essence, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 96-97, 105, 402; II, pp. 105-108 (God’s speech); On free will versus predetermination and the doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*), see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 330-331; II, pp. 145, 149-154, 158-161, 167; *Tanbīh*, Mazyadī ed., I, pp. 242, 419-420, 436; IV, pp. 308, 311, 487; For a brief but illustrative discussion of theodicy, see *Ibid.*, V, p. 569.

⁵⁴ E.g., *Sharḥ*, II, p. 100.

al-i'tiqād).⁵⁵ In order to present a world of tangible divine self-disclosures that serve as passageways into the world of the unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*), Ibn Barraġān systematically identifies each name's "traces" (*āthār*) and "pathways" (*masālik*) in the cosmos. These "traces" can then be used as ladders to ascend by contemplation to the divine presence. This contemplative crossing (*'ibra*) represents the crux and central concern of Ibn Barraġān in the *Sharḥ*, as in his later works, and herein lies its originality, for it is his grafting of Ibn Masarra's concept of *i'tibār* onto the *Sharḥ al-asmā'* genre.

To give an example of *i'tibār* as it applies to the divine names, Ibn Barraġān demonstrates how God's name, the One (*al-wāḥid*), is reflected in the cyclical return of all things to their origin, in the revolution of the planets around their orbits, or in the harmonious arrangements of parts and wholes. The traces and pathways of the One are evident in the natural world, for instance in how disparate roots, stems, branches, leaves, and fruits unite to make up a single tree. The human constitution also manifests the One, by virtue of the fact that various body components such as toes, veins, and ligaments combine to form one limb, a foot, or the fact that the human body is presided over by a head which directs its thoughts, and by a heart which directs its consciousness. Just as all things are dependent upon the One, so the human body is dependent upon the human heart, for "if the heart decays, the entire body decays" according to a famous ḥadīth.⁵⁶ Ibn Barraġān then turns his gaze to patterns in society, noting how fathers preside over families; large cities over smaller towns; and countries over cities, and so on. Thus all things, from the minutest to the greatest proclaim God as *al-Wāḥid*, the One.⁵⁷

And just as the One manifests in the world, it also manifests in the hereafter at a much higher scale: the ultimate sign of oneness is the beatific vision (*al-ru'ya al-karīma*) on Judgment Day, as well as the solitude of death, internment, and recompense, "for even if all creatures were to die with someone, that person would still be sentenced to a lonely death." As well, paradise and hell are created by and for the affirmation of God's oneness.⁵⁸

Then Ibn Barraġān looks at the name *al-Aḥad*. He remarks that whereas *al-Wāḥid* denotes divine oneness as it relates to the world of duality and multiplicity, *al-Aḥad* denotes the "Exclusively One" and stands apart from creation; it is God's exclusive unity in Himself and is independent

⁵⁵ Ibid., II, p. 148. ⁵⁶ Bukhārī, #52; Muslim, #1599. ⁵⁷ *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 74–76.

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, pp. 72–80.

of all relationality. In his *i'tibār*, Ibn Barraḡān states that this name is inaccessible, incomprehensible, and closest to the Most Supreme Name (*al-ism al-a'zam*) and leaves no traces in this world. Our crossing into the name, or *'ibra*, is achieved by conceiving of the precosmic reality of all existents within God's knowledge before He said "Be!" to them.⁵⁹ Given the inaccessibility of *al-Aḥad*, Ibn Barraḡān cannot, and does not offer any practical devotional recommendations for this name in his *ta'abbud* section.

3 Devotional practice of servanthood (*ta'abbud*)

Theologizing about God's names is not merely an analytic exercise but a spiritual practice. By understanding the ultimacy of God's qualities, we gain awareness of His intimacy. Ibn Barraḡān thus concludes with a separate discussion of the practical implications of each name. He calls this devotional passage "the practice of servanthood" (*ta'abbud*). Ibn Barraḡān addresses his listener intimately as "my brother" (*yā akhī*) and enjoins him to decipher the traces of the name in creation, attain certainty about its knowledge,⁶⁰ and imbibe its distinctive spiritual grace (*baraka*).⁶¹ For example, *ta'abbud* with respect to The One (*al-Wāḥid*), behooves a complete realization that only God creates, nourishes, and sustains us, and so it behooves upon the believer to worship Him exclusively and without a partner. As a consequence of His oneness and exclusivity, moreover, God only accepts devotional works that are performed for His sake.⁶²

In his later works, Ibn Barraḡān interjects admonitory passages within the fold of his exegetical, theological, or mystical discussions to enjoin his reader to fear God, strive to perform acts of worship, fight the temptations of the carnal soul, discern between good actions and blameworthy actions, and increase God-consciousness at each and every moment of life. These passages, which are usually pronounced in the first person and addressed either to the reader directly or the author himself, and are preceded by the expression "know, may God grant us both success" (*i'lam waffaḡanā Llāhu wa-iyyāka*), are sometimes written in heartfelt rhymed and rhythmic prose (*saj'*)⁶³ and afford Ibn Barraḡān the opportunity to display his linguistic artistry. It should be noted, however, that by the last third of the *Sharḥ*, his devotional sections grow thinner and

⁵⁹ Ibid., I, p. 84. ⁶⁰ Ibid., I, p. 151. ⁶¹ E.g., Ibid., I, p. 60. ⁶² Ibid., I, p. 82.

⁶³ For examples of admonitory passages in his tafsīrs, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 90; V, p. 300; *Īdāb*, ¶36.

repetitive. At this point in the work, Ibn Barraġān merely enjoins the listener to intense piety or to seek knowledge of the name as its form of *ta'abbud*.⁶⁴ Here Ibn Barraġān seems to have exhausted his imagination and, to avoid redundancy, he sometimes skips over the *ta'abbud* or *i'tibār* sections altogether.⁶⁵ This loss of creativity is not to be attributed entirely to Ibn Barraġān's unimagination, however. For it should be recalled that his work spans over 130 names, many of which are closely identical in meaning. In many cases, he refers the reader back to a previous devotional discussion in the *Sharḥ*.⁶⁶

Letter Speculations in the *Sharḥ*

Ibn Barraġān's treatment of the "science of the letters" (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*) in the *Sharḥ* is worth briefly analyzing. His approach differs from that of the Brethren, as well as later theoreticians of philosophical mysticism like Ibn 'Arabī, since he does not speculate on the significance of the numerical value of the letters (*'ilm al-jafr*). Yet, in the vein of Pythagorean-inspired authors like the Brethren,⁶⁷ Ibn Barraġān does posit that the Arabic consonants are distinguishable from one another not only by their distinct phonetic sounds and points of articulation (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*), but also by their symbolic significances, which he occasionally describes in terms of shape, color, and form. Ibn Barraġān devotes many pages to the particular personality, or phonetic qualities, properties (*khawāṣṣ*), characteristics (*aṭbā'*), and denotations (*dalālat*), of the letters that make up various divine names, especially in his introductory linguistic and lexical treatments (*istikhrāj lughawī*). He posits a relationship between each divine name and the named reality, and ponders the distinctive properties of the letters to further his understanding of the names' multilayered meanings. For Ibn Barraġān, the combination of these different letter-properties creates the meanings of the names,⁶⁸ since "the points of articulation are signifiers (*dalālat*) of the locations of meanings."⁶⁹ Ibn Barraġān presumes his readership's knowledge of phonology, that is, the "science of sounds"

⁶⁴ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 239.

⁶⁵ *al-Fātiq*, in *Ibid.*, II, p. 202; see also *al-Rāfi'*, *al-Khāfiq*, II, p. 213.

⁶⁶ Some synonymous names, for example "Exalter of Ranks" (*Rāfi' al-Darajāt*) and "Possessor of Majesty" (*Dbū al-Jalāl*), are not commented upon, *Ibid.*, I, p. 176; see also II, pp. 213, 298.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the Brethren's use of letters, see Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, pp. 49–52.

⁶⁸ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 325. ⁶⁹ See his extensive discussion in *Īdāb*, ¶498–499.

(*ʿilm al-aṣwāt*) and the various categories of the letters associated with the art of Qurʾānic recitation (*tajwīd*).⁷⁰

Ibn Barraḡān identifies the names of God, not the Arabic consonants, nor the “disconnected letters” of the Qurʾān,⁷¹ as the roots of all existence. Everything in creation, including language itself, derives ontologically from the divine names. Bearing this principle in mind, Ibn Barraḡān seeks a deepened understanding of every aspect of the names, including their sounds, and letters, to arrive at linguistic ends. For instance, the seven “elevated letters” (*ḥurūf al-istiʿlāʾ*; namely ghayn, khāʾ, qāf, ṣād, ḍād, ṭāʾ, ḏāʾ) produce an elevated sound with the rising of the tongue to the upper palate and denote specific qualities and meanings. The name “the Strong” (*al-Qawī*) can be interpreted according to the phonetic qualities and properties of the sounds emitted by the letters Q-W-Y. The letter Qāf is one of the “elevated letters” (*ḥurūf al-istiʿlāʾ*) produced by the rising of the tongue to the upper palate. It connotes divine qualities of subjugation, victory, and overpowering (*ḏuhūr*). The Qāf is also one of the “clatter letters” (*laqlaqa*), which indicates self-manifestation and victory. The Wāw and Yāʾ are lower, inner letters, denoting that the divine attribute of power exists inwardly prior to becoming manifest.⁷²

Ibn Barraḡān inverts commonsensical expectations by positing that the Semitic tri-consonantal root system of the Arabic language derives from the divine names, and not the reverse. Putting philology at the service of theology, he states counterintuitively that the consonantal root R-Ḥ-M, for example, derives from the divine name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*). He categorically denies the etymological derivation (*ishtiqāq*) of *al-Raḥīm* from the root R-Ḥ-M. In metaphysical terms, the names are the first level of God’s disclosure, and they bring the relation of God and creation into existence. Therefore, the names are not only the things that name the relation, but they also originate it.

⁷⁰ On *tajwīd*, see Kristina Nelson’s *The Art of Reciting the Qurʾān*.

⁷¹ Discussions of the 14 “disconnected letters” (*al-ḥurūf al-muqattaʿa*, discussed in Chapter 6) that open various sūras of the Qurʾān rarely occur in the *Sharḥ* for the obvious reason that this work is a commentary on the divine names, not the Qurʾān. Moreover, he does not invoke the science of the letters systematically for every name, but provides *ad hoc* comments on most consonants of the Arabic alphabet that make up the names, whenever it suits his purposes, and without privileging any letters over others.

⁷² *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 147. For further examples, see Ibn Barraḡān’s discussion of Allāh and Huwa, I, p. 42; al-Jalīl, I, p. 171; Subbūḥ and Quddūs, I, p. 297; al-Malik, I, pp. 301–02; al-Shahīd, II, pp. 3–4; al-Qāḥir and al-Qaḥḥār, II, p. 157. See also his theoretical discussion of the letters in II, pp. 104–106.

For the names are ontologically prior to the relation, even though we can only think of the names in relation to us. As he puts it:

The names of God do not derive from external [roots or meanings]. Rather, external [roots and meanings] derive from the latter. Moreover, one comes to know the [divine names] from those external [roots and meanings] which approximate their meanings in existent things, which themselves are meaningful names which are understood by the letters that make them up.⁷³

Ibn Barraġān's denial of the very structure of the Arabic tongue in favor of idea that the sounds and letters of the names are ontologically rooted in the reality of God's names anticipates later Sufi authors such as 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jillī (d. ca. 826/1424),⁷⁴ and allows for him to uphold sacredness of the letters above historical and linguistic contingencies and as conveyers of the properties of the divine names.⁷⁵

Ibn Barraġān's *Sharḥ* versus Ghazālī's *Maqṣad*

Scholars often assume that Ibn Barraġān's *Sharḥ* is heavily influenced by Ghazālī's treatise, "The Sublime Objective in Commenting Upon God's Beautiful Names" (*al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*).⁷⁶ This assumption of indebtedness to Ghazālī can be traced as far back as Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*.⁷⁷ However, the presumed intellectual connection is based on circumstantial, rather than textual, evidence. It is also informed by a view of Andalusī intellectual history that is constantly judged in relation to the East and not on Andalusī's own terms. Garden contends, and I agree, that Ibn Barraġān was highly original and not Ghazālī's mere *alter ego*. But whereas Garden suspects that Ibn Barraġān may have been slightly informed by Ghazālī, I argue that he was not so in the least.⁷⁸ Ibn

⁷³ Ibid., I, p. 41.

⁷⁴ See Mazyadī's citation of the quote by Jillī from *al-Insān al-kāmil* in Ibid., I, p. 44, n. 2.

⁷⁵ For discussions on the name and the named (*al-ism wa-l-musammā*), see Ibid., I, pp. 55–56, 59, 104, 153, 177, 187, 191, 271, 273, 297, 376, 401–402, 409–411; II, pp. 103, 119, 151, 155–156, 171–172, 194–195, 223, 270–272, 277; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 63.

⁷⁶ See for instance de La Torre's edition, pp. 26–28, who basis her assumption on the fact that Ibn Barraġān shared a disciple, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ, with Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī who was al-Ghazālī's student in the East.

⁷⁷ Ibn al-'Arabī speaks of Ibn Barraġān's doctrine of *takhalluq bi-l-asmā'* in the *Futūḥāt* (II, p. 649). Cf. De La Torre (ed.), *Sharḥ*, p. 28, n. 40. This doctrine is of secondary importance to the *Sharḥ* and the expression *takhalluq bi-l-asmā'* is hardly mentioned. When it is, Ibn Barraġān prefers to employ the expression *takhalluq bi-asmā' Allāh* instead of *takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh*.

⁷⁸ Garden, "Al-Ghazālī's contested revival," pp. 145, 195.

Barrajān displays originality in his writings and at times may seem to go out of his way to make counterclaims to Ghazālī. But there is no textual or historical evidence proving that Ibn Barrajān even read the *Maqṣad* before writing his *Sharḥ*. In fact, the textual evidence at hand points to the opposite, that he had no knowledge of the *Maqṣad*, and this is corroborated by the historical fact that the *Maqṣad* was a latecomer in al-Andalus.

Whether or not Ibn Barrajān borrowed from or was even aware of Ghazālī's text is secondary to the fact that there are fundamental doctrinal disagreements between the two figures. To name one example, counter to Ghazālī, Ibn Barrajān rejects etymological derivations of the divine names *a priori*. He holds that creation and language proceed from the names, not the other way around, and thus discards the possibility that *Allāh*, for instance, is derived from W-L-H or 'L-H.

Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, seems to assume a connection between Makkī and Ghazālī on the one hand, and Ibn Barrajān on the other. He contends that Makkī's and Ghazālī's discussions of theomorphic ethics (*takhalluq*, lit. "assuming the character-traits of God), which hark back to the early writings of the Sufi of Baghdad Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), inspired Ibn Barrajān's devotional discussions on servanthood (*ta'abbud*, that is, the practice of servanthood with respect to a particular divine name). Ibn Taymiyya criticized certain aspects of the doctrine of *takhalluq*, specifically Ghazālī's far-fetched attempt at drawing divine-human correspondences for every name, including uniquely divine ones like the Overbearing (*al-Jabbār*) and the Self-Great (*al-Mutakabbir*). Ibn Taymiyya argues that Ghazālī's theomorphic ethics opened the door to two extremes: for Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Sab'īn, and other heretics (*malābida*) this led to notions of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and union (*ittihād*) with God, whereas for the anti-Ghazālīan al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), none of God's traits could be assumed by man at all. In light of this polarizing dispute, Ibn Taymiyya reckons that Ibn Barrajān avoided the word *takhalluq* in his *Sharḥ*, opting instead for the more neutral sounding phrase, "practice of servanthood" (*ta'abbud*):⁷⁹

Ghazālī and Makkī both adopt the concept of assuming character traits (*takhalluq*). Abū al-Bayān al-Dimashqī refuted Makkī, while Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Māzarī and others refuted Ghazālī on this point, proclaiming that there is no divine character trait that man may assume. That is why Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barrajān in his *Commentary on the Beautiful Names* avoided the terms

⁷⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *K. al-Safadiyya*, II, p. 337–339.

“assuming character traits” (*takhalluq*) and “bearing resemblance” (*tashabbuh*) and used the term “practice of servanthood” (*ta‘abbud*). He would mention the meaning of the name and its etymology, then a reflective passage (*i‘tibār*) where he points out its traces in creatures, followed by a [passage on] the servant’s practice of the servanthood (*ta‘abbud*) which God mandated for him.⁸⁰

What is surprising is that Ibn Barraġān speaks disapprovingly of the notion of “assuming the ‘character traits’ of God.” He considers it inappropriate to speak of God as having “character traits” (*akhlāq*) and makes no connection between the doctrine *takhalluq* and Sufism or Ghazālī at all. To his knowledge, this doctrine was abused by philosophers. He presumably has in mind Ibn Miskawayh’s (d. 421/1030) treatise on theomorphic ethics, “Refinement of Character” (*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Ibn Barraġān accuses philosophers of turning away from prophetic knowledge in favor of intellectual abstraction, on the grounds that they had acquired divine character traits (*akhlāq Allāh*). Ibn Barraġān thus associates the doctrine of *takhalluq* not with Ghazālī but with the latter’s archnemesis, the philosophers. He does away with the phrase altogether, and only in one rare instance opts for the more cautious wording “assuming the meanings of His names” (*takhalluq bi-ma‘ānī asmā‘ihi*), which secures a distance between God and man, as opposed to “assuming God’s character traits.”⁸¹

Ibn Barraġān’s dismissal of the doctrine of *takhalluq* as a deviation of the philosophers signals that he knew nothing of the *Maqṣad* when he wrote the *Sharḥ*. In fact, Ghazālī’s influence on the *Sharḥ* is very unlikely on chronological grounds. The *Sharḥ* must have been written around Ibn Barraġān’s early to mid-forties, that is before 495/1102 when Ghazālī’s books were introduced into al-Andalus by Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī, and before the book-burning of 503/1109.

The following is Ibn Barraġān’s discussion, and dismissal of, *takhalluq* in the *Sharḥ*:

It is reported that certain followers of philosophy—those who belittle prophecy and aggrandize their limited intellects by giving precedence to reason (*ma‘qūl*) over prophetic knowledge—have said: “the best act is likening oneself to God’s character traits (*tashabbuh bi-akhlāq Allāh*) to the extent that is humanly possible.” This is an error in both expression and methodology (*‘ibāra wal-madhhab*). As for its erroneous expression, it is because nothing is likened to God in any way, i.e., [nothing is comparable to] the state of a [divine] name nor an attribute. And, strictly speaking, it is impermissible to talk of God’s attributes as

⁸⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jāmi‘ al-masā‘il*, VI, p. 126.

⁸¹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyādī, I, p. 159.

“character traits” since actual “character traits” are ascribed to creatures (*khalq*), whereas God’s attributes and names cannot be described in this way. Character traits exist in creatures (*al-akhlāq mawjūda bi-l-makhlūq*) and are engendered by the command . . . *Be and it is* . . . As for the methodological error, they claim that knowledge of a knower amounts to becoming similar to Him, and it is because of this corrupt belief . . . that they claim freedom (*ḥurriyya*) and drop knowledge which is the Book and the Sunna.⁸²

As a final note, it must be stressed that the *Sharḥ* and the *Maqṣad* differ markedly in purpose and overall orientation. Ghazālī’s central concern in the *Maqṣad* is to expound upon his doctrine of theomorphic ethics (*takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh*) by demonstrating how humans can acquire qualities of all the divine names. This presumes an active involvement on the part of the soul in its quest for a divine character trait. The Ghazālian seeker of the names plays an active role in seeking God’s character traits. In contrast, Ibn Barraḡān proposes a “practice of servanthood with respect to the names” (*ta’abbud bi-l-asmā’*), which presupposes a passive relation to the names in which the disciple exposes himself to the benefic graces (*baraka*) of a particular name, either by getting to know its properties or by trying to live up to its imports and requirement (*muqtaḍayāt*), in order to benefit from its grace (*baraka*) – not by actively and directly inculcating its qualities. The *Maqṣad* conceives of a top-down relationality to the names, whereas the *Sharḥ* features a bottom-up *ta’abbudī* approach.

Furthermore, whereas *takhalluq* is central to the *Maqṣad*, *ta’abbud* is secondary to the *Sharḥ*. The heart of Ibn Barraḡān’s *oeuvre* is rather the penetrative *i’tibār*, or, crossing into the mysteries of the unseen world (*‘ālam al-ghayb*). Ibn Barraḡān seeks to inculcate his reader with a concrete awareness of divine presence through God’s names, traces, and signs. Maqdisī’s “abridgement” (*mulakḥkhaṣṣ*) of the *Sharḥ* missed this point, for in it he assembled the *ta’abbud* passages and overlooked the *i’tibār* entirely. In similar vein, modern scholars fail to appreciate Ibn Barraḡān’s *Sharḥ* on its own terms by focusing on how it relates to Ghazālī’s concept of *takhalluq*.

Interestingly, Ibn Barraḡān seems to warm up somewhat to the idea of theomorphic ethics, *takhalluq*, later in the *Īḍāḥ* (¶156), his last work which was composed around 526–530/1131–1135. By then he had presumably read Ghazālī’s articulation of the doctrine, was known as the “Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” and no longer associated *takhalluq* with only the philosophers. But the Sevillian master is still somewhat uncomfortable

⁸² Ibid., II, p. 126.

with the idea that God has “character traits” (*akhlāq Allāh*), a description which he deems too temporal and anthropomorphic to befit the Almighty. In a discussion of saints who attain great spiritual realization, he concedes that the friends of God are “characterized by [God’s] description” (*yattaṣifu bi-waṣfihi*). Here, he tacitly endorses *takhalluq* but still shuns the Ghazālīan turn of phrase. This development in Ibn Barraĵān’s thought in the *Īdāh* may signal that Ghazālīanism left an imprint upon him at the end of his career.

Unidentified Sources of the *Sharḥ*

The works of Ibn Barraĵān pose a challenge to the intellectual historian because our author hardly cites any authorities by name. His corpus, which synthesizes his broad mastery of religious sciences, was written almost entirely from memory, including the bulk of Qur’ānic verses, Ḥadīth reports, variant readings (*qirā’āt*), and Biblical passages in his works.⁸³ His reliance on memory is signaled by the fact that Ibn Barraĵān frequently merges similarly worded Qur’ānic verses or Ḥadīth reports into a single quotation. Sometimes he explicitly admits not being able to recall a particular passage from an unnamed book.⁸⁴ Moreover, most of his Ḥadīth reports are cited according to the meaning but not the wording of the original reports. Aside from the Qur’ān, only his citations of poetry verses, which are more easily retainable owing to the rhyme and meter, are cited with verbatim precision.

Ibn Barraĵān had many reasons for not citing his sources in the *Sharḥ* and in his later works.⁸⁵ First, his discretion is an attempt at preempting criticism that might be leveled against him by coreligionists for using esoteric or unreliable sources. Second, his lack of citations reflects his deep commitment to the idea of reengaging the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth and freeing oneself from the methodological, theological, and juridical pedantries of the competing schools of law and theology. By refraining from

⁸³ He cites a supplication of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889). See supplication “*allāhumma kballiṣnī min dhunūbī* . . .” in *Ibid.*, I, p. 222.

⁸⁴ *Tanbīh*, Damad Ibrahim Paşa 25, fl. 185a: he concludes a discussion of ‘*ulūm al-awā’il*’ by saying “and he mentioned things which I cannot recall” (*wa-dhakara kalam lastu adhkuruh*).

⁸⁵ For examples of uncited mystics’ statements often preceded by the statement “some have said” (*qāla ba’dhum*), see *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 43, 174, 181, 218, 332–33; II, pp. 164, 179, 360–361. In *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, see I, pp. 79, 117, 437; V, p. 287; In *Īdāh*, check index entries, p. 950.

quoting the Mālikī or Ash'arī position on a particular matter, he consciously sought to expose a universal and nondenominational truth to his readers.

On a more practical level, it should be noted that he wrote the *Sharḥ* for an audience of both laymen and specialists. The former would have had no interest in scholarly citations, and the latter would have been acquainted with many of the works which Ibn Barraḡān was consulting as he wrote the *Sharḥ*. Finally, rather than reiterating formalities as would be required in a classical work of Qur'ān exegesis or jurisprudence, authors of divine names commentaries can often dispense with cumbersome citations, chains of transmission (*isnāds*), and other conventions with an eye to brevity. In addition, Ibn Barraḡān's citational silence was programmatic. Excepting the philosophers (*falāsifa*), naturalists (*ṭabī'īyyūn*), and the occasional mention of Mu'tazila,⁸⁶ all of whom Ibn Barraḡān calls out on several occasions, Ibn Barraḡān never names his intellectual enemies. His polemical discretion was in part cautionary. The memory of his persecuted predecessors, Ibn Masarra and Ṭalamankī, was all too real. Finally, Ibn Barraḡān's silence was motivated by a pious reluctance that was part of his temperament. His courtesy (*adab*) toward intellectual adversaries and distaste for confrontational polemics aligns with his biographers' descriptions of his character.⁸⁷

Citations and References in the *Sharḥ*

The Qur'ān is the most-oft quoted text in the *Sharḥ*. Verses are referenced either to show the Qur'ānic derivation of a divine name or to corroborate his doctrinal or devotional discussions. His Ḥadīth citations are relatively fewer in number, but serve the same function as the verses. The *Sharḥ*'s modern editor, Mazyadī, tracks Ibn Barraḡān's Ḥadīth reports back to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of Muslim and Bukhārī, although there are a fair number of reports from other sources, including collections of Bayhaqī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and Ṭabarānī. Mazyadī traces some reports back to renunciant

⁸⁶ Ibn Barraḡān occasionally refutes Mu'tazilī doctrines in his *Sharḥ*. His knowledge of Mu'tazilism seems cursory and was most likely derived from indirect sources rather than direct engagement with a Mu'tazilī commentary on the divine names. For a convincing refutation of the idea that there was a "school" of Mu'tazilism in al-Andalus as Ibn Ḥazm puts it, see Stroumsa, "The Mu'tazila in al-Andalus."

⁸⁷ In *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 235, Ibn Barraḡān strongly disagrees with the mainstream interpretation of the name al-Laṭīf as "The Subtle" and claims that this understanding detracts from divine majesty. But despite his strong disagreement, he does not mention specific authors' names.

works such as Ibn al-Mubārak's *al-Zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq* and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's *al-Tahajjud wa-qiyām al-layl*, as well as al-Jāhiz's *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*.⁸⁸ Another important work is Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī's (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, from which Ibn Barraĵān repeatedly drew maxims, anecdotes and even page-long supplications.⁸⁹ Since Ibn Barraĵān cites his aḥādīth from memory, his reports follow the meanings but not the exact wording of the report. He also cites *Ḥadīth Qudsī* reports, or "holy sayings," which are ascribed directly to God but not included in the Qur'ān. The most popular of these is the famous statement that begins with: "Oh son of Adam, I was ill and you did not visit me; I was hungry and you did not feed me."⁹⁰

Aside from Prophets and Companions of Muḥammad, authorities mentioned by name can be counted on a single hand.⁹¹ Ibn Barraĵān also names a number of historical and Biblical figures and poets. His scattered Biblical references occur with much less frequency or length than in his exegetical works, though he does display familiarity with Biblical material already in the *Sharḥ*.⁹²

Unlike in the *Tanbīh* where Ibn Barraĵān is often in conversation with other Sunnī exegetes whom he refers to generically as *ahl al-tafsīr*, in the *Sharḥ* he seldom makes such references. As mentioned above, the commentary by Ghazālī most likely penetrated al-Andalus after the composition of the *Sharḥ*, and Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's was undoubtedly written after Ibn Barraĵān's *Sharḥ*. As well, there were relatively few *Shurūḥ* works that could have been at Ibn Barraĵān's disposal in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus. These would have included commentaries such as

⁸⁸ See editor's footnotes in *Ibid.*, throughout vols. I and II.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 168, 185, 189, 399; II, pp. 260. One may add 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwazī's (d. 181/797) treatise on renunciation entitled *al-Zuhd wa-l-Raqā'iq* (*Ibid.*, I, p. 168, n. 1). Ibn Barraĵān also cites a supplication attributed to the Prophet that has a parallel in al-Ghazālī's *Ibyā'*. *Ibid.*, I, p. 271.

⁹⁰ Muslim, #2569; Ibn Ḥibbān, #269. See parallels in Mathew 25:35–45.

⁹¹ Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), (*Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 332); Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185/801) (*Ibid.*, I, p. 246); Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) (*Ibid.*, I, p. 391); and a certain renunciant Ibn al-Muḥabbar (d. 206/821) whose book *Khiṣāl al-'aql wa-āfāt al-hawā* is cited in the *Ibid.*, II, p. 281. In *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 258–259 a second book by the same author is cited, namely *K. al-Mināṣṣāt li Ibn al-Mukhbīr*. The vocalization and placement of the name ابن المحسر is problematic. This may be Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar/al-Majīd b. Qaḥdhām b. Sulaymān al-Ṭā'ī al-Bakrāwī al-Baṣrī Abū Sulaymān (d. 206/821). See Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, XIV, entry 145, pp. 147–150; Baghdādī *Hadīyyat al-'arīfīn*, I, p. 358; and Josef van Ess, *Theologie*, II, pp. 119–120, describes him as a follower of Sufyān al-Thawrī (I, p. 226; IV, pp. 746–747).

⁹² See *Sharḥ*, ed. De La Torre, pp. 42–44.

Mubarrad's (d. 285/898) lexicographic treatment of the names, as well as *K. al-Zīna* of Rāzī (d. 322/933) who employed an Ismā'īlī approach to the science of the letters ('*ilm al-ḥurūf*') alongside his lexicographic treatment. With regard to the names' derivations from Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and theological interpretations, Ibn Barrajān may have consulted works by Baghdādī (d. 429/1037). In al-Andalus, Ibn Barrajān would have also consulted the lost commentary by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). Moreover, Qushayrī's (d. 465/1072) pioneering Sufi treatment of the genre, which discussed ways of inculcating the properties of the names, may have also influenced Ibn Barrajān's *Sharḥ*, although further study is required to fully substantiate these links.⁹³

III TANBĪH AL-AFHĀM ILĀ TADABBŪR AL-KITĀB AL-ḤAKĪM
WA-TA'ARRUF AL-ĀYĀT WA-L-NABA' AL-'AẒĪM

Ibn Barrajān appears to have dedicated his fifties and early sixties to teaching students in Ḥadīth and other subjects in his village outside Seville. He authored his major Qur'ān commentary entitled *Tanbīh al-afhām ilā tadabbūr al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'aẓīm*, between the years 515–525/1121–1130, in which he cites the *Sharḥ* and the *Irshād*,⁹⁴ when he was 65 to 75 years of age.⁹⁵ This last part of Ibn Barrajān's life was his most productive in terms of written output. The *Tanbīh* spans approximately 800 folios, or five volumes in Mazyadī's and Hosnī's printed editions.

The popularity and renown of the *Tanbīh* is attested by the considerable number of extant manuscripts found in European, Arab, and especially Turkish libraries. Many of the extant copies, especially in Turkish libraries are mistakenly entitled *K. al-Irshād* or *Tafsīr al-Irshād*, or generically *Tafsīr Ibn Barrajān* for reasons explained above.⁹⁶ Presumably,

⁹³ See de La Torre's introduction to the *Ṣarḥ*, pp. 25-29.

⁹⁴ In the *Tanbīh*, the *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* is cited quite frequently. See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 61, 75, 86. For reference to the *Irshād*, see *Ibid.*, I, p. 160.

⁹⁵ By 522/1128, he had already reached sūra 30. Assuming he composed his exegesis following the order of the sūras from 1 to 114, he would have written just over half the *Tanbīh* by 522/1128.

⁹⁶ Konya, MS Yusuf Ağa 4744 (247 ff.; ca. 600 h; beginning–sūra 6); Konya, MS Yusuf Ağa 4745 (182 ff; ca. 600 h; sūra 7–18); Konya, MS Yusuf Ağa 4746 (365 ff; ca. 600 h; sūra 19–111); Bursa, MS Huseyin Çelebi 38 (170 ff.; 652 h; beginning–sūra 2:160); Istanbul, MS Reisülküttap 30 (422 ff.; 667 h; beginning–sūra 18); Istanbul, MS Damad Ibrahim 25 (204 ff.; 677 h; beginning–sūra 2); Istanbul, MS Feyzullah 35 (535 ff.; 7th ca. h; beginning–sūra 110); Istanbul, MS Darülmünevi 42 (242 ff.; 7th ca. h; sūra 38–114); Istanbul, MS Çarullah 53 m (263 ff.; 738 h; beginning–sūra 5); Magalia, MS Esmahan Sultan 38 (265 ff.; 839 h; beginning–sūra 15); Istanbul, MS Şehid Ali 73 (441 ff.; 1127 h;

these texts originate from a Marrakesh copy of the *Tanbīh* transmitted by Ibn Barraġān's Ḥadīth student Qanṭarī. The latter faithfully narrated his master's work as well as the *Sharḥ* to the circle of Abū Madyan in North Africa.

The first attempt at editing the *Tanbīh* was undertaken by the Moroccan scholar Muḥammad al-'Adlūnī al-Idrīsī, who published its second half (sūras 17–114) in a two-volume edition in 2011 with carefully cited Ḥadīth references.⁹⁷ Regrettably, the edition relies solely on the incomplete MS Munich Aumer 83 since the editor at the time was apparently unaware of the other extant manuscript copies. 'Adlūnī's edition is also beset by editorial problems,⁹⁸ and the overall editorial quality of this edition deteriorates markedly toward the second half of volume II. 'Adlūnī's work was superseded by Mazyadī's complete five-volume edition of the *Tanbīh*⁹⁹ on the basis of four collated manuscripts that were at his disposal.¹⁰⁰ Feyzullah 35 is the primary manuscript for this edition. Overall, Mazyadī's welcome edition is quite reliable, although it is not free of typographical errors and misplaced diacritics. Mazyadī includes Ḥadīth references, and inserts extra clusters of Qur'ānic verses prior to Ibn Barraġān's *fuṣūl*. These inserted clusters of verses, which are easily distinguishable from the original text of the *Tanbīh* by their different font, are useful for locating the Qur'ānic passages that Ibn Barraġān is discussing and render the work more navigable and reader-friendly. Mazyadī's introductory study of Ibn Barraġān's biography and exegetical method is disappointing, however, and, as in the *Sharḥ*, he provides no indexes. A third edition of the *Tanbīh* was completed by

complete); Istanbul, MS Damad Ibrahim 27 (621 ff.; 1128 h; complete); Istanbul, MS Damad Ibrahim 26 (478 ff.; 1129 h; complete); Istanbul, MS Reisulküttap 31 (316 ff.; 1168 h; sūra 19–114); Istanbul, MS Feyzullah 35 (ninth/fifteenth century; complete).

⁹⁷ *al-Taḥṣīn al-ṣūfī li-l-qur'ān li-Abī al-Ḥakam b. Barraġān (d. 536h) aw Tanbīh al-afḥām ilā tadabbur al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'aẓīm*, 2 vols., ed. 'Adlūnī, Casablanca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 2011.

⁹⁸ These include misleading and unfaithful demarcation of Ibn Barraġān's *fuṣūl* sections and paragraphs, occasionally imprecise placement of brackets to mark end of aḥādīth, inconsistent usage of *hamzas*, misplacement of diacritical marks (*taṣḥīf*), uncited Qur'ānic verses, and poor indices.

⁹⁹ *Tafsīr Ibn Barraġān: Tanbīh al-afḥām ilā tadabbur al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'aẓīm*.

¹⁰⁰ – Feyzullah 35 in Istanbul, copied in ninth/fifteenth century. Primary MS for the edition.
– Al-Khizāna al-'Āmma, Rabat, 242 Kāf, incomplete (from sūra al-A' rāf to beginning of al-Nūr).
– Qom, Tehran, 350, first half of *Tanbīh*.
– Munich MS mscod83, second half of *Tanbīh*.

Fateh Hosni and printed in five high quality volumes in 2016. Given Hosni's doctoral research on Ibn Barrajān and his familiarity with our author's exegetical teachings, his edition may prove to be the most reliable edition of this important tafsīr. Unfortunately, I have not yet obtained a copy of this recent work.¹⁰¹

Stylistic and Organizational Features of the *Tanbīh*

Ibn Barrajān's major tafsīr, *Tanbīh al-afhām ilā tadabbūr al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'aẓīm*¹⁰² (lit. "Alerting Intellects to Meditation on the Wise Book and Recognition of the Signs and the Tremendous Tiding [of Judgment Day]"), is one of the most important exegetical works produced in the Muslim West. It differs markedly in organizational pattern and doctrinal orientation from previous tafsīrs in the region, and should not be consulted as a verse-by-verse running commentary on the Qur'ān. In contrast to the more orderly compositional structure that characterizes previous Andalusī tafsīrs and the *Sharḥ* itself, Ibn Barrajān undertook the writing of the *Tanbīh* without a clear-cut and premeditated outline. It is an eclectic mélange of material culled over the years from a wide spectrum of sources, not a systematic tafsīr. The bulk of the text features *ad hoc* deliberations drawn from memory and inspired by the author's multifaceted scholarly formation. Often, his expatiations are not so much prompted by the contents of a given sūra but are answers to questions from students, or engagements with other scholars or readings that he happened to be doing at the time of his writing.¹⁰³ Many passages reflect his personal spiritual experiences with the Qur'ān interlaced with Mu'tabirūn teachings (*abl al-i'tibār*), Eastern Sufi treatises, renunciant literature (*zuhdiyyāt*), Sufi exegetical material, the science of the letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*), and cyclical notions of time. Other passages read as formal scholarly treatments of the Qur'ān drawn from a vast mental repository of various disciplines.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Tanbīh al-afhām ilā tadabbūr al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'aẓīm, al-ma'rūf bi-Tafsīr Ibn Barrajān*, 5 vols., ed. Fateh Hosni 'Abd al-Karīm, Amman: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn, 2016.

¹⁰² The term *al-naba'* *al-'aẓīm*, "the tremendous tiding [of Judgment Day]" is taken from sūrat al-Naba' (Q. 78:2).

¹⁰³ E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 301: the new *faṣl* begins with a brief outline of the different ways of waging *jihād* with the sword, the tongue, and the heart, then he abruptly carries on his discussion of sūra 29 (al-'Ankabūt).

¹⁰⁴ These include Qur'ānic variant readings (*qirā'āt*), Ḥadīth reports, mainstream Sunnī tafsīr, Biblical material, Ash'arī theology (*kalām*), legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), causal circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), Arabic poetry and literature, and even

The *Tanbīh* is akin to a colorful necklace that strings together gemstones of different shapes and sizes, and the thread that links these jewels together is Ibn Barraġān's mystical experience of, symbiotic interaction with, and scholarly reflections upon the divine Word. It is a lengthy and eclectic meditation on the Qur'ān complemented and informed by Ibn Barraġān's engagements with students, rigorous spiritual practices, and multifaceted interests. It unfolds without a single thematic cohesiveness. Themes recur spontaneously throughout the tafsīr and are treated each time from a different angle. For example, in order for a reader to fully grasp his idea of, say, the Universal Servant (*al-'abd al-kullī*), it is necessary to analyze discussions of this theme scattered throughout his entire body of work.

Ibn Barraġān structured the *Tanbīh* to correspond with the sequence of Qur'ānic sūras from beginning to end, starting probably with sūra 1 (Umm al-Kitāb/Fātiĥa) and ending with 114 (al-Nās), with a thin introduction added at the very end.¹⁰⁵ His commentary on sūras 1–7 (especially 2) are disproportionately longer and more thematically aligned to the contents of the Qur'ān than sūras 8–114. In Mazyadī's printed edition, sūras 1–7 occupy no less than 47% of the entire corpus.¹⁰⁶ The author justifies these longer discussions by pointing to their Qur'ānic

geometry and medicine. On occasion, the polymath treats his readers to carefully crafted and highly eloquent rhyming prose (*saj'*) passages. As in the *Sharĥ*, these deliberate redactions usually take on an admonitory tone and evince the author's skills as a littérateur.

¹⁰⁵ Unlike the *Sharĥ*'s introduction, which diligently explicates the author's methodological approach to the divine names, he devotes very little at the beginning of the *Tanbīh* to a discussion of his exegetical approach. He briefly alludes to his doctrine of complete penetration into the world of the Qur'ān, the "superior reading" (*tilāwa al-'ulyā*) (see Chapter 6, introduction) and notes that the Qur'ān contains many registers of meaning that can only be accessed through an exertion of scholarly endeavor combined with mystical insight. Certain fundamental principles that inform Ibn Barraġān's thought pattern are also pointed out here. But the introduction is not to be taken as an exhaustive nor a particularly significant list of core doctrines, since the "Universal Servant" (*al-'abd al-kullī*), the "Reality Upon Which Creation Was Created" (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*), and even his "crossover" (*ibra*) are hardly mentioned. For an introduction to such a major work, it is surprising that he did not put more effort into it. He probably wrote it at the tail end of his tafsīr when, to put it starkly, he had run out of imaginative ink. Ibn Barraġān appends a lengthy discussion of the formulaic phrase of the *basmala* (i.e., *bismi Llāh al-Rāḥmān al-Raḥīm* "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful") to his introduction, since he considers it to be distinct from sūra 1 (Umm al-Kit-āb). (*Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 60–68.)

¹⁰⁶ In Mazyadī's edition of the *Tanbīh*, sūras 1-7 span 961 of the total 2,069 pages of the tafsīr.

significance.¹⁰⁷ As we shall explore in Chapter 6, he considers sūra 2 to be a differentiation (*tafṣīl*) or “unpacking” of sūra 1, which in turn contains the entire message of the Qur’ān in condensed, nondifferentiated mode. Behind these explanatory justifications, one senses that, for the first half of the *Tanbīh*, Ibn Barraḡān wished to author a systematic and running commentary, working methodically through the entirety of the Qur’ān. As the aging scholar progressed in his tafsīr, however, he became more selective with regard to which verses to interpret. He grew weary of the tediousness and sheer volume of his initial undertaking in the first 7 sūras, and favored a more selective approach guided by personal proclivities and interests.

Ibn Barraḡān’s gradual shift in writing is also evidenced by a change in the headings. The earlier subsections (*fuṣūl*) up to the end of sūra 2 (Baḡara) feature handy designated titles such as “*faṣl* on invocation (*dhikr*)” or “*faṣl* on contemplating the significance of water.”¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, these neat headings are abandoned by the second third of the *Tanbīh*. Likewise, in the second half of the *Tanbīh* Ibn Barraḡān’s choice of verses and themes of discussion grow progressively narrower, and the Qur’ān is used more as a springboard for incoming thoughts and ruminations. All of the above may indicate why Ibn Barraḡān’s tafsīr is described as “incomplete” by the biographer Ibn al-Abbār.¹⁰⁹

In contrast to citations in the *Sharḥ*, Ibn Barraḡān generally does not provide his reader with references, citations, and formal data concerning the Qur’ān.¹¹⁰ On rare occasions he does refer his reader to a passage from the *Sharḥ* or the *Irshād*, or to a specific sūra in the *Tanbīh*.¹¹¹ He only vaguely cross-references previous passages or earlier works, and when he does he simply turns the reader’s attention “elsewhere” in his work. Since such cross-references usually read as, “we have previously said” (*qad*

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., IV, p. 344 (*aṭalnā al-kalām . . .*).

¹⁰⁸ Compare titles of *fuṣūl* of the *Tanbīh* in Ibid., I with those of II-V.

¹⁰⁹ The sum total of the verses commented upon in the *Tanbīh* do not add up to the entire Qur’ān. For instance, he skips over verses 6-7 of sūra 1 (Umm al-Kitāb/Fātiḡa) and moves into sūra 2 (Baḡara) (Ibid., I, pp. 93-95). This disorderliness renders the *Tanbīh* at times unpredictable, inconsistent, and repetitive, and his disjointed ruminations can be laborious to read.

¹¹⁰ Unlike mainstream Sunnī tafsīrs like Ṭabarī or others, whom Ibn Barraḡān generically refers to as “the exegetes” (*ahl al-tafsīr*), it cannot be utilized as a reference work, nor should its worth be evaluated against such works. He rarely introduces a sūra by reiterating factual data such as whether it is Meccan or Medinan, or the number of its verses, nor does he proceed through each verse systematically.

¹¹¹ For instance, in sūra 103 (al-‘Aṣr), he refers readers to a discussion covered under sūra 4 (al-Nisā’). See Ibid., V, p. 540.

taqaddama al-kalām),¹¹² it is difficult to determine whether he is referencing earlier passages of the *Tanbīh*, other works, or even an outside classroom discussion that he had with his students. This disorderly and somewhat carefree approach of his exegetical corpus suggests that the *Tanbīh* was written over the course of many years, and that as he progressed deeper into his work, he only retained a faint memory of the location of previous passages.

The organization of the *Tanbīh* into separate *fuṣūl* (“sections,” or perhaps “sessions”) conveniently dovetails with Ibn Barraġān’s particular mode of approach. He divides his work into topical units which separate his text into vague organizational units. Each stand as independent and tightly knit core reflections on a cluster of 5 to 20 sequential Qur’ānic verses.¹¹³ These self-contained sections end abruptly and were presumably written in one sitting, giving way to a new *faṣl* and topic of discussion, as if the author were interrupted in the middle of his writing process, only to return to it the next day with a fresh thought in mind.¹¹⁴ For instance, in one passage he jumps from a discussion of the denizens of paradise and their recollections of the herebelow (*dunyā*) to a new *faṣl* in which he analyzes Adam’s vicegerency (*khalīfa*) on earth.¹¹⁵

By grouping his patterns of thought into different *fuṣūl* whose contents are only loosely bound to the sūra, Ibn Barraġān affords himself the freedom to explore those themes that strike his attention while bestowing the *Tanbīh* with a sense of structural cohesiveness and a progression through the Qur’ān.¹¹⁶

¹¹² One finds the expression *taqaddama al-kalām* early on in the *Tanbīh* in references to topics that were not previously discussed.

¹¹³ These clusters of āyas, which form the starting points for his discussions, are never fully written down. Instead, he mentions only the opening and ending of the cluster with a view to brevity and assuming that his reader has memorized the Qur’ān. He also tends to incorporate uncited extracts from other passages of the Qur’ān in his verse clusters. *Ibid.*, I, p. 198.

¹¹⁴ E.g., *Ibid.*, I, pp. 123–124; 216; See also IV, p. 213 where Ibn Barraġān leaps from a discussion of the antichrist (*dajjāl*) to inner interpretation (*ta’wīl*) of sūra 12 (Yūsuf).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 179.

¹¹⁶ The *fuṣūl* vary considerably in length and tend to be shorter and more concise in the *Tanbīh* than in his other works, especially the *Īdāh* where they tend to be more lengthy and disorganized. But the length of a *faṣl* is not indicative of its importance, for sometimes he interjects a short and pithy *faṣl* consisting of a few maxim-like sentences that summarize his entire thought-system (E.g., *Ibid.*, I, p. 470). Such summations act as cornerstones to remind the reader of Ibn Barraġān’s essential concern in the *oeuvre*, namely to point out ways of ascending to God by contemplating revelatory knowledge in all its forms. In addition to the *fuṣūl*, it should be noted that our author includes other organizational units, for example “Reminder” (*tanbīh*), “Clarification” (*bayān*),

IV *ĪDĀḤ AL-ḤIKMA BI-AḤKĀM AL-‘IBRA*

It was probably not too long after finishing the *Tanbīh* that Ibn Barraḡān was either requested by his students, or felt a personal need to work through the Qur’ān once again, compiling a minor supplementary commentary entitled *K. Īdāḥ al-ḥikma bi-ahkām al-‘ibra*. This work is only “minor” in comparison with the slightly more lengthy *Tanbīh*. The *Īdāḥ* spans approximately 600 manuscript folios, or 850 pages in the recent Böwering and Casewit edition. The *Īdāḥ* was compiled on the basis of transcriptions of Ibn Barraḡān’s lectures which were delivered from memory when the author still had the *Tanbīh* fresh in mind. The dictation of the *Īdāḥ* could have easily spanned over the course of three to four years, that is, between 526 and 530/1131 and 1135, when he was between 76 and 80 years of age. It is possible, however, the *Īdāḥ* was compiled some years after Ibn Barraḡān’s death by his disciples on the basis of a scribe’s transcriptions. In the *Īdāḥ*, only the *Sharḥ* and the *Tanbīh* are cross-referenced.¹¹⁷

Ibn Barraḡān authored the *Īdāḥ* as a supplement to the *Tanbīh*, and it may be that the two tafsīrs were meant to be studied as one unit. Occasionally in the *Īdāḥ*, the author refers his readers to the *Tanbīh* and presupposes familiarity with it. Presumably, Ibn Barraḡān’s prominent pupil Ibn al-Kharrāṭ transmitted the *Īdāḥ* to his students, since Ibn al-Kharrāṭ’s student Mahdawī in turn taught this work to the young Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī. The *Īdāḥ* was taught as a textbook and transmitted by Ibn Barraḡān’s students over the course of two generations, and then fell into disregard by the seventh/thirteenth century following the Jerusalem prophecy at which point the *Tanbīh* enjoyed popularity among Sufis and Qur’ān exegetes. Ibn ‘Arabī read this work at Tunis in 590/1194 under

“Notification” (*i’lām*) or “A Different Perspective” (*wajh ākḥar*), which seem to serve specific purposes: generally his “Reminder” (*tanbīh*) passages consist of analyses on points that are either problematic or a cause of scholarly contention, whereas “Clarification” (*bayān*) consists of a broader definition or insight into the significance of a given theme. A “Notification” (*i’lām*) marks an idea that is not intrinsically part of his ongoing discussion, but that Ibn Barraḡān wants to communicate, while “A Different Perspective” (*wajh ākḥar*) typically fits as an appendix or alternate viewpoint to a previous *faṣl*. In addition, Ibn Barraḡān frequently introduces a new topic of discussion by abruptly presenting a new verse into the *faṣl*. In these instances, proclamations such as “His statement, Mighty and Exalted is He” (*qawluhu ‘azza wa-jalla*) or “God Most High’s statement” (*qawluhu ta’ālā*) serve to demarcate his new discussions within a *faṣl* (E.g., *Ibid.*, V, p. 29.)

¹¹⁷ For references to the *Tanbīh*, see *Īdāḥ*, ¶966, 993. For *Sharḥ*, see ¶13, 41, 42, 327, 438, 554.

‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī.¹¹⁸ Mahdawī had certainly studied the *Īdāḥ* with Ibn al-Kharrāṭ (d. 581/1185), who was Ibn Barraġān’s direct disciple. Ibn ‘Arabī acknowledged the value of the Sevillian master’s exposition of the “Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created,” (*al-ḥaqq al-makblūq bihi al-khalq*), as well as his prediction the recapture of Jerusalem, but he deemed that the Sevillian had not reached full mastery of the spiritual sciences.¹¹⁹

There are only two known manuscripts of this work, both of which are housed at the Süleymaniye Library in Turkey, first unearthed by Böwering in the 1980s. The first witness, written in bold Naskhī script, is the two-volume Mahmut Paşa 3-4, dated 596/1199 and spanning approximately 575 folios. The second, in one volume, is Murat Molla 35-36, dated 612/1215, and spanning 323 folios. Murat Molla 35 is miscatalogued as *Kitāb al-Irshād*.¹²⁰

The full title of this work, *Īdāḥ al-ḥikma bi-ahkām al-‘ibra*, calls for two clarifications. First, the keyword here is *‘ibra* or “crossing” which generates *ḥikma* (wisdom). *Ibra* is commonly understood to mean an “admonition or exhortation by which one takes warning or example” (Lane). Since the root of *‘ibra*, ‘-B-R, means “to cross over,” it can also be defined as a crossover “from the knowledge of what is seen. . . [to] the knowledge of what is not seen” (Lane). It is this second definition of *‘ibra*, namely crossing over into the unseen world (see Chapter 8) by penetrating the depths of Qur’ānic verses and signs of God in nature, that Ibn Barraġān has in mind, and which give rise to wisdom.

This notion of *‘ibra* harks back to the writings of Ibn Masarra (see Chapters 1 and 8). The central objective of the *Īdāḥ* is therefore attainment of wisdom (*ḥikma*), which is identified as the fruit of the crossing (*‘ibra*). As for the term *‘ahkām*’ (lit. “properties”), which should not be confused with legal rulings (*ahkām shar‘iyya*) nor with divinatory speculations (*‘ilm al-ahkām*), it seems to refer here to the principles, or applications of *‘ibra* as a method of crossing into the unseen. The title of this work is

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabī refers to the *Īdāḥ* and “*Tafsīr Ibn Barraġān*” interchangeably in his discussion of the Jerusalem prediction. (See Melvin-Koushki, *Ibn Barraġān, seer of God’s cycles*, p. 6.)

¹¹⁹ See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 127.

¹²⁰ These two manuscripts are meticulously described in the introduction to the *Īdāḥ* (*A Qur’ān Commentary by Ibn Barraġān of Seville*, pp. 29–33). Both were copied within approximately half a century of the author’s death, presumably from the archetype. Together, they are extremely reliable, carefully transcribed, and almost orthographically identical.

therefore most accurately translated as “The Elucidation of Wisdom According to the Principles of the Crossing,” or more loosely, “Wisdom: The Crossing into the Meanings of the Qur’ān.”

Introduction, Style, Structure, and Composition of the *Īdāḥ*

In contrast to the *Tanbīh*, the *Īdāḥ*’s introduction (*muqaddima*) and commentary on sūra 1 (al-Fātiḥa) offers only a brief summary of sorts of Ibn Barraḡān’s central ideas. This seems to indicate that while the *Īdāḥ* did not undergo thorough revision, the *Tanbīh* was revised by Ibn Barraḡān and the introduction written after its completion. Ibn Barraḡān’s generic and admonitory introduction to the *Īdāḥ*, which spans 4-6 folios, is written in short and choppy spurts of rhyming prose (*saj‘*). Rather than lay out an exegetical methodology, he admonishes his reader, calling onto reverential piety, and emphasizes the paramount importance of God’s revelation, His signs in nature (*āyāt*), and His friends (*awliyā‘*). The Qur’ān, he proclaims, contains knowledge of past and future, and is accessible to the saints who are the representatives of the prophets and who undertake the crossing (*ya‘burūn*) onto God’s wonders (*‘ajā‘ib Allāh*). Moreover, he says, natural signs (*āyāt*) such as the sun and the moon complement the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, and serve as links (*waṣl*) between God and the human heart.

The *Īdāḥ* follows the loose organizational pattern of the *Tanbīh*, progressing through the entire Qur’ān from beginning to end with only a few discrepancies.¹²¹ It is divided into “sections” (*fuṣūl*) and other subheadings, and is dotted with vague cross-references to “previous passages” (*qad taqaddama*) from who-knows-where. The *Īdāḥ*, even more than the *Tanbīh*, is a journey without a roadmap. It reads as a haphazard draft, a preliminary thought process put to paper without prior deliberation. Its *fuṣūl* are not always cohesive patterns of thought, and seldom revolve

¹²¹ In the *Īdāḥ*, Ibn Barraḡān merges sūra 9 (al-Tawba which is not preceded by a *basmala*) with surā 8 (al-Anfāl), whereas in the *Tanbīh* a separate chapter is devoted to sūra 9. Also, sūra 28 (al-Qaṣaṣ) does not receive a separate commentary in the *Īdāḥ* and may have been dropped in the copying process. The text jumps from 27 (al-Naml) to 29 (al-‘Ankabūt). There are also a few discrepancies in the titles of the sūras of the two tafṣīrs: sūra 40 is called al-Mu‘min in *Īdāḥ* and Ghāfir in *Tanbīh*; sūra 42 is called Ḥā Mīm ‘Ayn Sīn Qāf in *Īdāḥ* and al-Shūrā in *Tanbīh*; sūra 45 is called al-Sharī‘a in *Īdāḥ* and al-Jāthiya in *Tanbīh*; sūra 61 is called al-Ḥawāriyyīn in *Īdāḥ* and al-Ṣaff in *Tanbīh*. There are also several minor title discrepancies in the shorter sūras since they are selected from different combinations of the opening words of each sūra.

around one core idea. The *Īdāh* conveys a highly personal engagement with the divine Word in which the author's exegesis of the text is inseparable from his eisegesis of his world of ideas.

As was the case with Tustarī and Qushayrī's tafsīrs, the *Īdāh* was delivered orally and extemporaneously by the elderly Ibn Barraġān, probably in the presence of select disciples and a professional scribe, over the course of many months or years.¹²² Each individual *faṣl* represents a separate class session, or dictation.¹²³ Dictated entirely from memory, the *Īdāh* is virtually devoid of cited authorities, and often merges analogously worded Qur'ānic verses together under one āya.¹²⁴ Thus the *Īdāh* is not a running verse-by-verse commentary and cannot be used as a reference work. It is, to use Saleh's term, a madrasa-style textbook directed at spiritual aspirants rather than an encyclopedic commentary for scholarly reference.¹²⁵ It comprises the reflections of a revered elderly scholar who goes through the Qur'ān, picking clusters of verses that strike him from each sūra, and using them as a launchpads for his expatiations. The verses act often as hooks or suspenders for thought patterns that reemerge over and again.

Central Themes of the *Īdāh*

Despite the considerable amount of thematic overlap between his two tafsīrs, Ibn Barraġān's paramount goal in the *Īdāh* is to instruct his disciples on how to behold the unseen (*ghayb*), or as he puts it repeatedly, to "cross over from the visible into the invisible" (*al-'ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghā'ib*). Ibn Barraġān no longer tries to maintain a balance between exoteric and esoteric sciences. Discussions of variant readings (*qirā'āt*), names of Ḥadīth narrators, early Companions, and other authorities are

¹²² For a comparison of Ibn Barraġān's method of composition with that of Sulamī and Qushayrī, see Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 111; Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'ān Scholar*, p. 130. But that is not to say that all orally dictated works are grammatically and organizationally deficient. Juwaynī's famous theological treatise *al-Irshād*, for instance, consisted of organized transcribed lectures. Ibn Barraġān was not a systematic thinker nor a theologian of Juwaynī's caliber, and moreover, was probably in his seventies or eighties when he narrated the *Īdāh*.

¹²³ Oral transmission of the *Īdāh* is signaled by his laxity with grammar (e.g., ¶295: *anna fī al-qur'ānī fahm^{mm}* instead of *fahm^{am}*), and oral mistakes of transcription (¶875, one finds *'allamahu kull^a lughban* instead of *lughbat^{am}*).

¹²⁴ To name one of several examples, *Īdāh*, ¶ 1: Q 3:81 is meshed with Q 38:88; as well, ¶17: Q 12:111 and Q 10:37 are conflated.

¹²⁵ Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition*, p. 199.

almost entirely disregarded.¹²⁶ For instance, whereas the authoritative Companion Ibn ‘Abbās is cited dozens of times in the *Tanbīh*, he is only mentioned once in this supplementary *Īdāh*.¹²⁷ On the other hand, a select number of favored Qur’ānic āyas surface time and again and are commented upon repeatedly in this text. These are (1) Q. 57:3, 25:2, 23:88 on God’s omnipotent rule over all creation; (2) Q. 57:4 58:7 on God’s omnipresence at every instant; (3) Q. 7:172 on the precosmic existence of mankind and the Day of Covenant; (4) Q. 14:48 on the final transformation of this earth into a new earth and skies on Judgment Day, a verse which captures the ontological connection between both worlds.

In lieu of the *Tanbīh*’s formal Qur’ānic scholarship, therefore, the *Īdāh* is a draft of deliberations that features long and recurring discussions of doctrines like “The Clear Reality” (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*), “The Real to Whom is the Destination” (*al-ḥaqq alladhī ilayhi l-maṣīr*) or the “Primordial Covenant” (*al-‘ahd al-awwal*). Moreover, Biblical materials feature much more prominently in the *Īdāh*. He engages doctrines inspired by the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, such as the “tree of life” (*shajarat al-ḥayāt*), and the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” (*shajarat ma’rifat al-khayr wa-l-sharr*). These Biblical concepts in effect replace the *Tanbīh*’s oft-repeated Qur’ānic images of the Olive Tree (*shajarat al-zaytūn*) and the “Tree of the Real Upon Which Creation is Created” (*shajarat al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*).

Citations in the *Tanbīh* and *Īdāh*

Ibn Barrajan’s exegetical corpus draws upon a variety of unnamed Qur’ānic, Ḥadīth, theological, literary, renunciant, Sufi, and Neoplatonized sources. However, what comes across is a text which appears to be entirely of his own independent creation. Aside from Prophetic and Biblical figures, he cites only a handful of works and authorities by name. In the *Tanbīh*, and less so in the *Īdāh*, which has hardly any nonscriptural references, most of his cited interpretations are referenced generically. For instance, his citations of the mainstream classical exegetical opinion begin with statements such as “the exegetes say” (*qāla ahl al-tafsīr*). Or, to stress that a given opinion is accepted by most exegetes, he

¹²⁶ See *Tanbīh*, Damad Ibrahim Paşa 25, fl. 11b, where his commentary on sūra 1 discusses extensively the variants in *mālik* and *malik*, as well as *al-ḥamdu*, *al-ḥamdi*, and *al-ḥamda*. Such discussions are frequent in the *Tanbīh* and rare in the *Īdāh*.

¹²⁷ *Īdāh*, ¶45.

mentions an opinion of “the majority of exegetes” (*al-jumhūr min ahl al-tafsīr*), or on the contrary of “certain exegetes” (*ba’ḍ al-mufasssīrīn*). These generic references to accepted majority or minority positions signal the most basic interpretations, and are typically inserted as prefaces to Ibn Barraġān’s counterassertions. Ibn Barraġān’s frequent contentions with *ahl al-tafsīr* are invariably supported by Qur’ānic or ḥadīth references.¹²⁸

The authorities whom Ibn Barraġān cites most often by name in the *Tanbīh* are early scholars of Qur’ānic readings among the Companions and Followers. The *Tanbīh* also features ad hoc references to the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Abū ‘Ubayda’s (d. 210/825) *Majāz al-qur’ān*, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad’s *Kitāb al-‘ayn*, and *Kitāb al-munājāt* by a certain renunciant known as Ibn al-Muḥabbar (d. 206/821).¹²⁹ Among mystics, he quotes al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728),¹³⁰ Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896),¹³¹ and Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931).¹³² The cited authorities are usually inserted in passing and are clearly of less significance to the author than his unnamed citations.

Ibn Barraġān lifted brief passages wholesale from Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s (d. 386/996) mystical treatise entitled *Qūt al-qulūb* (“The Nourishment of the Hearts”)¹³³ in which he discusses God’s unity (*tawḥīd*), comparability and incomparability (*tashbīh/tanzīh*), and omnipotence (*qudra*). The keen-eyed Ḥanbalī polymath Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1327) was the

¹²⁸ To name a few examples from the *Tanbīh* (ed. Mazyadī) see I, pp. 189–190 where Ibn Barraġān rejects the notion of Adam and Even being naked before the Fall. He defends this opinion on Qur’ānic grounds and *contra* the Bible and the mainstream interpretation. See also I, p. 163 where he offers a new interpretation of the Qur’ānic term *waqūd jahannam*. See IV, p. 522, where he rejects the account tendered by many exegetes that the prophet Dāwūd committed grave sin, and provides an alternative Qur’ānic reading. See also II, p. 64 where he argues, “contrary to many” that God *does* forgive those who associate partners unto Him (*shirk*) if they repent (*tauba*).

¹²⁹ See n. 90.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 187, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is quoted saying: “knowledge of the Qur’ān is a remembrance that is only known by men who remember God (*dhakūr*)”; see also I, p. 236 where al-Baṣrī is quoted in a discussion about the amount of time for which people are condemned to Hell and wishes that he would only dwell therein for 1,000 years (as opposed to an eternity).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 242. He cites an account by Sahl al-Tustarī of certain Sufis’ ability to translocate.

¹³² Ibn Barraġān narrates a ḥadīth about the antichrist (*dajjāl*) on the authority of Ibn Masarra; see *Ibid.*, III, p. 461.

¹³³ Makkī’s *Qūt* is a lengthy work divided into 48 chapters (*faṣl*), the longest being Chapter 32 on the stations of certitude (*maqāmāt al-yaqīn*). It attempts to determine the central doctrines of Sufism and the corresponding key terms of the mystic’s spiritual experience and to illustrate the ways and practices of the Sufi masters. Like Ibn Barraġān’s works, it is marked by the absence of the *isnād*. Like the *Ihyā’*, the *Qūt* has been criticized by ḥadīth scholars for inclusion of inauthentic ḥadīth.

first to spot these copied passages and went as far as to describe our author as a “follower” (*min atbāʿ*) of Makkī.¹³⁴ Although I would not characterize Ibn Barraĵān as a follower of Makkī, there is no doubt that he possessed and consulted either a copy of the popular *Qūt* or one of several Andalusī abridgements (*mukhtaṣar*) that were composed around his time.¹³⁵

A handful of these unnamed sources in the *Tanbīh* can be identified. One of the most important is Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) monumental Qurʾān commentary *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, which Ibn Barraĵān cites either to point out a mainstream interpretation of an āya which he disagrees with, or to describe the majority (*jumbūr*) and minority opinions of Sunnī scholars on a particular subject. Ṭabarī is also referenced when presenting a host of possible meanings of a word.¹³⁶ Other exegetes that can be detected include Wāḥidī’s (d. 468/1076) *al-Wajīz fī tafsīr al-qurʾān al-ʿazīz*.¹³⁷

Many of Ibn Barraĵān’s linguistic and literary discussions are paraphrased passages from sources that were at his disposal. Arabic linguists (*ahl al-maʿrifa bi-l-lisān*) are often generically cited to support a linguistic interpretation. For instance, he draws ancient Arab lexicographic definitions from Azharī’s (d. 370/980) *Tahdhīb al-luġha*, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad’s

¹³⁴ Massignon, who was probably informed by Ibn Taymiyya’s writings, maintained that the *Tanbīh* and the *Sharḥ* were representative of the teachings of Makkī and the Sālimiyya. Massignon, *Essay on the Origins*, p. 201. For Ibn Taymiyya’s remarks, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-fatāwā*, II, p. 182; see also V, p. 81 for a similar passage, and V, p. 142. In a chapter entitled “Concerning Abū Ṭālib’s opinion on transcendence (*ʿulū*) and other matters where he is right and where he erred,” Ibn Taymiyya says: “Baghdādī mentions in his *Tārīkh* that a group of scholars spoke out against what Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī said regarding the attributes. What he fell into in terms of indwelling (*ḥulūl*) was spilled over into other masters such as Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barraĵān and his likes.” See V, p. 289. The uncited passage which Ibn Taymiyya had in mind is to be found in the *Sharḥ* under the name the First (*wāḥid*). Ibn Barraĵān quotes more or less directly from the *Qūt* but without naming Makkī. (*Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 113. See also the edition of De La Torre, p. 61). See also *Īdāh*, ¶143. *Wa-kāna fī kull makān bimā huwa lā fī makān, wa-ma.ʿa kull mawjūd bimā huwa mutaʿāl ʿan ṣifāt al-muḥdathīn*. For a comparable passage, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 293 where he states: “God is the Outward above whom there is none, and the Inward below whom there is none” (*wa-huwa al-zābir laysa fauqahu shayʿ, wa-l-bāṭin laysa dūnahu shayʿ*). Compare also Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, III, pp. 1176–1177 (Gramlich, *Die Nahrung der Herzen*, III, pp. 14–15) with *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 94; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, pp. 57–58.

¹³⁵ The earliest of this genre is by Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Murābiṭ al-Andalusī (d. 485/1192) who may have met Ibn Barraĵān, and is entitled *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-gharaḍ al-maṭlūb min jawābir qūt al-qulūb*. (Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, II, p. 1361).

¹³⁶ See for instance Ibn Barraĵān’s discussion of the word *raqīm* in sūra 18, which echoes Ṭabarī’s account. *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, pp. 438–439.

¹³⁷ Hosni, *Manhaj al-imām b. Barraĵān fī tafsīrihi*, p. 32.

(d. ca. 165/791) *Kitāb al-‘ayn*, and Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/933) *Jamharat al-lughā*.¹³⁸

V ‘AYN AL-YAQĪN

Aside from these four works whose authenticity is beyond question, it is possible that Ibn Barraġān wrote a fifth treatise called “The Eye of Certainty” (‘*Ayn al-yaqīn*) which may have been lost during the uprising of Ibn Qasī’s *Murīdūn* and the downfall of the al-Murābiṭūn. The ‘*Ayn* did not leave any imprint in Islamic historical and biographical literature, nor is it testified to in manuscript catalogues. The ‘*Ayn* is not cited in any of his earlier works and so, if authored by him, would have been his last and probably shortest work. Its title is preserved in a *fatwā* by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) in which he condemns the ‘*Ayn al-yaqīn*, along with Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*, Ibn Sab‘īn’s *Budd al-‘ārif*, and Ibn Qasī’s *Khal‘ al-na‘layn*, to the torch.¹³⁹ Assuming the reliability of this reference,¹⁴⁰ ‘*Ayn al-yaqīn* would have been Ibn Barraġān’s most esoteric work.¹⁴¹ In the *Tanbīh*, he equates the “eye of certainty” with *al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq* (Chapter 5). It would be likely then, that this treatise is a discussion of that earlier doctrine.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

¹³⁹ This *fatwā* is found in Ṣāliḥ al-Maqbalī’s (d. 1108/1696) *al-‘Alam al-shāmikh*, p. 500.

¹⁴⁰ Biqā’ī’s (d. 885/1480) version of the *fatwā* does not mention Ibn Barraġān’s ‘*Ayn al-yaqīn*. See Biqā’ī, *Maṣra‘ al-taṣawwuf*, p. 167.

¹⁴¹ See Qāsim Samarrā’ī’s *‘Ilm al-iktināb*, p. 153 for a reference to a copy or an excerpt of Ibn Barraġān’s so-called *K. al-yaqīn fī tafsīr al-qur‘ān* in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya’s *al-Inbā‘ fī ḥaqā‘iq al-ṣifāt wa-l-asmā‘ li-Llāh ta‘ālā* by Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Ma‘d b. ‘Isā b. Wakīl al-Tujībī al-Iqlīshī (d. 549/1154). I have not been able to obtain this MS from Dār al-Kutub (Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, pp. 361, 370; S. I, p. 633). It appears to be part of a *majmū‘a* on the divine names, and might therefore be topically related to Ibn Barraġān’s *Sharḥ* despite the fact that it bears the title of *tafsīr*. My preliminary impression is that the ‘*Ayn al-yaqīn* is not an independent work of Ibn Barraġān, but rather a second title to one or part of his four major works. Brockelmann has a notice for Uqlīshī’s *al-Anbā‘ fī ḥaqā‘iq (ṣarḥ) aṣ-ṣifāt wa-l-asmā‘* Welieddīn 64, Kairo² I, 258, 344 (*GAL*, S. I, p. 633; see also vol. 1 pp. 361, 370).

The Divine Descent

Bridging the Chasm between God and Creation

INTRODUCTION

Ibn Barraĵān's cosmological teachings about the relation between God and creation lie at the heart of his scholarship and bear directly upon his approach to the Qur'ān and his concept of *i'tibār*, as discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. His cosmological synthesis stands on its own, and marks one of the earliest extensive engagements with the Neoplatonizing teachings of the Brethren of Purity and, possibly Ismā'īlism, in Sunnī mysticism. Ibn Barraĵān's cosmology also foregrounds Ibn 'Arabī's (d. 637/1240) to a remarkable extent. Section I analyzes the key and universal concept of Ibn Barraĵān's thought, namely the Universal Servant (*al-'abd al-kullī*) from which all of cosmic existence unfolds. The Universal Servant, which receives further elaboration in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*),¹ is a decisive reality that determines the form of the world and the human being. Since Universal Servant is also equated with the symbolism of the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), the source of all divine revelation, it bears upon the form of the Qur'ān. Hence the Universal Servant informs Ibn Barraĵān's key principle of associative correspondence between the universe as a composite whole, man as an individual, and the Qur'ān as a miraculous text. Section II discusses Ibn Barraĵān's doctrine of the "Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created" (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-kbalq*), the totality of God's presence in creation, which features repeatedly throughout his oeuvre.

¹ The term the Perfect Servant (*al-'abd al-kāmil*) was often evoked by Ibn 'Arabī as a synonym for the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). The term *al-'abd al-kullī* is also occasionally employed in his writings.

Section III examines Ibn Barrajān's hierarchical ontology and the various ways in which he substantiates his understanding of being, both scripturally and philosophically. Finally, Section IV addresses Ibn Barrajān's treatment of the signs of God in creation (*āyāt Allāh*) as windows into heaven. Particular emphasis is placed on three central signs: sun, moon, and water.

I THE DOCTRINE OF THE UNIVERSAL SERVANT
(AL-'ABD AL-KULLĪ)

Ibn Barrajān had no interest whatsoever in argumentative dialectics or elaborate rational proofs for God's existence, religion, prophecy, eschatology, and the like. He rested his religious conviction on the axiomatic assumption that the universe must have a Maker since it is orderly: "The first knowledge which the intellect [must acquire] is that a made object must have a maker."² To his mind, rejecting this basic truth stems from willful obstinacy (*'inād*).³ Instead of engaging in theological gymnastics, he preferred to seek God directly through the traces of His names and qualities in creation.

However, the timeless question of how God relates the universe did pose a philosophical problem for Ibn Barrajān. For he understood that there must be a relationship between the existence of God on the one hand, and the existence of man and the universe on the other. This relationship, on pain of violating monotheism, must determine the form of man and the universe. God's form must be the prototype of man and the universe not only because it is confirmed by the Ḥadīth ("God created Adam in His form"),⁴ but because if man and the universe were not created in God's form, then they would have to be created in another form. Yet nothing can serve as their prototype, since only God can be eternal. At the same time, if the form of temporal beings (man and the universe) were to derive directly from an Eternal Being, this would necessarily entail a change *in divinis* that would jeopardize God's pure unity, incomparability, and immutability.⁵

The problem of how multiplicity (*kathra*) emerges from unity (*waḥda*), or the temporal (*muḥdath*) from the Eternal (*qadīm*), took on various expressions in Late Antiquity and Islamic mystical and philosophical

² *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 6. ³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 299.

⁴ Ṭabarānī, #13580; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, #517.

⁵ Correspondence with Oludamini Ogunnaike, December 2013.

thought. The Neoplatonic First Intellect, Christian doctrines of the Logos, and the Sufi idea of the Muḥammadan Reality found in Tustarī's writings,⁶ the Perfect or Universal Man (*insān kāmil/kullī*) of the Brethren⁷ and Ibn 'Arabī, address this very point. Similarly, Ismā'īlī cosmology places the divine Word (*al-kalima*, or the Command, *al-amr*) between divine oneness and the first creation, the Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-kullī*) from which the world unfolds.

Ibn Barraḡān found his solution to this age-old philosophical problem in the Universal Servant (*al-'abd al-kullī*).⁸ Taking his cue from the Brethren's Universal Man (*al-insān al-kullī*) and perhaps indirect contact with the Neoplatonic-Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-kullī*), or even the early writings of Sulamī (d. 412/1021),⁹ Ibn Barraḡān makes similar gestures while deliberately avoiding Ismā'īlī and Neoplatonic terms. He conceives of his Universal Servant as the first, preexistential creation of God as one totality and one harmony (*jumla*). It is the initial, all-comprehensive reality that brings together all things.

⁶ Ibn Barraḡān's Universal Servant serves a similar cosmological function as Tustarī's Muḥammadan Light (*nūr muḥammad*). For Tustarī, the Muḥammadan Light is God's First Creation in preexistence. It takes the form of a translucent column of light (*'amūd*) in primordial adoration of God, just as the Universal Servant is depicted by Ibn Barraḡān as a man standing in prayer before God in preexistence. For Tustarī, the Muḥammadan Light is the preexistential prototype of man and of the universe, just as the Universal Servant is the form out of which mankind and the universe are created (Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 147–157). Despite the obvious parallels between the Universal Servant and the Muḥammadan Light, it is unlikely the Ibn Barraḡān's cosmological teachings were inspired by Tustarī's preexistential Muḥammad. It is striking that Muḥammad himself does not figure in any of Ibn Barraḡān's cosmological discussions and is never identified with the Universal Servant. Moreover, Qur'ānic verses like Q. 7:172; 24:35; 53:13–18 that inspire and anchor Tustarī's doctrine of Muḥammadan Light do not receive similar interpretive treatment in Ibn Barraḡān's works. Ibn Barraḡān borrowed not only the concept and terminology of the Universal Servant from the Brethren, but also their imagery of the Universal Servant as a man standing in prayer before God (see n. 17 below). Even though Ibn Barraḡān cites Tustarī on several occasions (see Chapter 4), it is not certain that he had access to his tafsīr. Had he read Tustarī's tafsīr, then he would have presumably recognized the connection between the doctrine of the Muḥammadan Light and the Universal Servant, or even integrated it into his works.

⁷ See Nasr, *An Introduction*, pp. 53 and 68 for a discussion of *al-insān al-kullī*, *al-insān al-juz'ī* in the epistles of the Brethren of Purity.

⁸ The Universal Servant is one of the most oft-repeated terms in the *Īdāh*. It bears different titles in his writings such as the "Universal Creation" (*al-khalq al-kullī*), "Universal Existent" (*al-mawjūd al-kullī*), the "Universal World" (*al-'ālam al-kullī*), or the "Universal Object of God's Act" (*al-maf'ūl al-kullī*). E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazayādī, II, pp. 6–7.

⁹ For a succinct but important reference to this concept in the writings of Sulamī, see Böwering, "Sulamī's Treatise," p. 353.

The Universal Servant can neither be categorized as a created existent, nor as part of the divine Essence per se, since it occupies an intermediate station between God and the world of creation.¹⁰ That is, the Universal Servant is situated *above* the world of creation, but is subsumed under the divine command. It never shares in the unique prerogative of God. But as a unifying metacosmic entity, the Universal Servant contains all realities of creation (macrocosm) and man (microcosm), and stands sublimely as the archetype through which both are created:

When the whole (*al-jamī'*) was given form (*tuṣuwwira*) as one form, that [reality] was the Universal Servant, that is, all created things that enter under engendered being and temporal origination (*mushtamila 'alā kull mā dakhala taḥta l-kawn*), namely time, place, direction, area, nearness, distance, spirit, body, existence, nonexistence, creation in its entirety, the command, and that which is determined by this determination, or follows it, or comes to be from it.¹¹

This totality (*jumla*) of creation . . . is created not in space or time, nor is it surrounded by a receptacle (*zarf*), for space, time, and receptacles are encompassed in its being. Only God's command surrounds it in power, knowledge, desire, giving of existence, and so on."¹²

At root, the Universal Servant is Ibn Barrajjān's way of conceiving of the relationship between God and creation, between the immutable transcendent One and the world of multiplicity and decay, without introducing multiplicity in the divine order. It is, as the Brethren put it, the supreme veil that separates God from creation.¹³ He insists that God's relation to the world of multiplicity is governed by pure oneness: He knows all things with a knowing that is one, measures out all things with a measuring (*taqdīr*) that is one, hears all audible things with a hearing that is one, and sees all things with a vision that is one.¹⁴ Oneness, in other words, permeates God's relationship to multiplicity through the Universal Servant. Thus the Universal Servant is the closest relativity to God without which creation could not take place, but which neither adds nor detracts anything from Him. It is the one that emerges from the One, and by virtue of its all-embracing oneness encompasses all existent things known by God in His knowledge. It is comparable to the very first rays that emerge from the sun. These initial rays are so close to the source of light that they resist clear-cut individualization as pure sun or ray. The quasi incomprehensible, ontological in-between-ness of the Universal Servant is

¹⁰ "The Universal Servant was made by his Maker not in the way of created things" (*wahuwa al-'abd al-kullī ja'alahu jā'iluhu 'alā ghayr makhlūq*) *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 48.

¹¹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 146–147. ¹² *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 152–153.

¹³ *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, p. 351. ¹⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 333.

a solution to the classical philosophical conundrum of how the One relates to multiplicity, the relative to the Absolute, the creation to the Infinite.

Ibn Barrajān expresses his understanding of the Universal Servant within the fold of his Qur'ān commentary in creative ways. For him, the fact that this universal truth is expressed in the Qur'ān was all too obvious. For instance, he interprets the verse *your creation and sending forth (ba'th) are as but one single soul* (Q. 31:28) to mean that the world of multiplicity projects out of the unity of the Universal Servant. Ibn Barrajān also finds reference to the doctrine of the Universal Servant in the famous verse of sūra 1 (al-Fātiḥa): *Praise God, Lord of the worlds (rabb al-'ālamīn)* (Q. 1:2). That is, God is Lord of the All, the Universal Servant, the all-comprehensive totality of the worlds. Another favorite verse of Ibn Barrajān in this context is Q. 25:2:

God alone created the so-called Universal Servant, which is expressed [Qur'ānically] as *the All* [in the verse]: *He created the All (kull shay', lit. "all things") and measured It out with a measuring* (Q. 2:25). This Universal Servant encompasses (*ḥawā*) every engendered thing, just as Eve (*Ḥawwā*) encompasses all mankind, both male and female. Except that Eve was Adam's counterpart—peace be upon them—, whereas God has no counterpart, similar, comparable, or analogous entity. He is the Independent, the Praiseworthy, and *nothing is as His like* (42:11).¹⁵

Whenever Ibn Barrajān mentions “The All” (*al-kull*) or “All things” (*kull shay'*) in his works, he usually has in mind the created universe as a whole; that is, the Universal Servant that subsumes all things in pure unity.

In typical fashion, Ibn Barrajān anchors his abstract teachings not only in concrete Qur'ānic verses, but also in Qur'ānic symbols. He identifies the All (*kull shay'*), or the Universal Servant, in its function with the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) or the Clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) upon which God inscribed His knowledge of all things from the beginning of creation to the day of Judgment.¹⁶ This Tablet contains God's knowledge of all things to the day of resurrection. It is the source of revelation, creation, human destiny, and everything that unfolds in existence. The Preserved Tablet is thus the external manifestation of God's inner knowledge about His creation,¹⁷ and it embodies “that which is required by the names, attributes, activities, commands, and prohibitions of God.”¹⁸ It is not cosmologically situated within the created order. It is

¹⁵ *Īdāh*, ¶368. ¹⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 289. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, p. 100.

¹⁸ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 60–61.

created above the containers of time and space, hence its equation with the Universal Servant.

In his meditations upon the Universal Servant, Ibn Barraġān also personalizes the form of this reality by envisioning it as a man standing in prayer (*raġul qā'im yuṣallī*) of perfect adoration and submission before God. This image of a supreme one-on-one between the All and the Absolute, which Ibn Barraġān lifts directly from the Brethren,¹⁹ exemplifies the supreme prayer which every believer should aspire to perform. A second useful image which Ibn Barraġān conjures is that of a ship (*saġīna*). Like Noah's ark which carried all species across the floods of the world, the Universal Servant sails upon the seas of nonexistence, engulfing all created existents within its hull.²⁰

The Universal Servant Versus the Particular Servant (*al-'abd al-juz'ī*)

When God said *Be* (kun!), the very first thing that emerged was not the world as we know it, but an all-embracing reality containing His knowledge of creation until the Day of Resurrection. All things unfold as a consequence of that reality, known in Ibn Barraġān's works as the Universal Servant. Thus the Universal Servant was created in the best form and the noblest determination (*taqḍīr*): the form of God's form (*ṣūrat al-ḥaqq*). Adam on the other hand, who represents the Particular Servant, was created in the form of the Universal Servant. That is, Adam was created in the "form of the form of God." His "form is [fashioned] according to the form of the Real" (*ṣūra 'alā ṣūrat al-ḥaqq*).²¹

Just as the qualities of the divine names and attributes permeate the reality of the Universal Servant in differentiated and nondifferentiated modes, likewise God created Adam and implanted within him the meanings of the names of God. Like the Universal Servant, the qualities of God's names permeate the Adamic form and are concealed within him.²²

¹⁹ The Brethren depict the Universal Man (*insān kullī*) in the form of "a human being who obeys His Maker" (*kamithli insānin ṭā'ī in li-Bāri'ihī*). See *al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a*, p. 277.

²⁰ *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 14–15. For an extensive discussion of the ship metaphor, see *Ibid.*, I, pp. 333–335.

²¹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 343–344.

²² For further discussions of *al-'Abd al-Kullī* in Ibn Barraġān's writings, see *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 48, 69; II, pp. 352–354; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 76–78, 88–92, 146–152; *al-maf'ūl al-kullī*, I, 302; *kull shay'*, I, p. 114; III, p. 397; *al-khalq kullī*, III, p. 427; *kull shay'*: IV, pp. 335, 346, 376, 418; V, p. 237; *al-'ālam al-kullī*, IV, p. 346; See *Idāḥ* index.

Adam's creation upon the form of the Universal Servant is the meaning behind the mysterious Qur'ānic myth in which God taught Adam *all the names* (Q. 2:31), and by virtue of that knowledge was able to teach them to the angels (Q. 2:30–38). The angels, unlike Adam, are not created in the image of God's form, the Universal Servant. They merely reflect specific aspects of His form. The names and qualities of God do not permeate their form as fully as they do Adam's. As a ḥadīth explicitly states: "God created Adam in His form" (*khalaqa Allāh Ādam 'alā šuratih*) or alternatively, "in the form of the Compassionate" ('*alā šurat al-rahmān*).²³ The form of God is the Universal Servant. Therefore, God bestows existence upon man through the Universal Servant. Ibn Barraḡān calls the Adamic form, or the archetypal man, the "Particular Servant" (*al-'abd al-juz'ī*).²⁴ Ibn Barraḡān personalizes the "Particular Servant," by ascribing it/him to Adam, who is a "part" (*juz'*) of the "whole" (*kull*). Adam is part of the Universal Servant, created as he was in the latter's form.²⁵

The Principle of Correspondence Between the Human Being, Creation, and Revelation

At the most fundamental level, all of reality can be divided into two categories: God and manifestation; or Allāh and "everything other than Allāh" (*mā siwā Allāh*). The Universal Servant, which is neither this nor that, links the two together. Thus, the world of *mā siwā Allāh* is like an arrow which emerges from God, through the Universal Servant, and points back to Him. *Mā siwā Allāh* in its totality is a super-sign (*āya*) that reflects and differentiates the Universal Servant, the form of God.

Furthermore, *mā siwā Allāh* is divisible into three basic categories that each signal and disclose God's form in distinct modes. These are: (1) the human being (*insān*), (2) physical creation (*khalaq*), and (3) revelation

²³ Ṭabarānī, #13580; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, #517.

²⁴ The Particular Servant is sometimes called the "Particular World" (*al-'ālam al-juz'ī*) or the "Particular Object of God's Act" (*al-maf'ūl al-juz'ī*). For discussions of *al-'abd al-juz'ī*, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 352; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 78, 148–150; IV, pp. 363–364; V, 515–517; and *Idāh* index.

²⁵ It is important not to confuse the relationship between the Universal Servant and the Particular Servant with that of the universe/macrocosm and the human being/microcosm. The macrocosm and microcosm are both situated at an ontologically lower rank than the Universal Servant, and are created in its form. Moreover, the Universal Servant is not synonymous with the Sufi notion of the sanctified soul of the ideal Sufi master who fully embodies God's names and attributes.

(*wahy*). The human being has free will and is a compact, nondifferentiated (*mujmal*) reflection of the Universal Servant; physical creation is a parsed out, differentiated (*mufaṣṣal*) cosmic reflection of the Universal Servant; revelation resembles both man and creation since it comprises both differentiated and nondifferentiated modes of divine self-disclosure: the compact *muḥkamāt* and the consimilar *mutashābihāt* verses (see Chapter 6). The triangular principle of correspondence between the human being, physical creation, and revelation arises from the fact that everything in *mā siwā Allāh* is ontologically rooted in the reality of the Universal Servant. Thus, correspondences are not only found above and below, or between *dunyā* and *ākhirā*, but also within manifestation between the three central loci of God's disclosure: the human being, creation, and revelation. For each locus reflects the Universal Servant and ultimately God in distinct modalities. This principle of correspondence deeply informs Ibn Barrajān's correlative thought process and is articulated in the following passage:

Realize that God hid His artisanry in creation, veiled power in the object of power, concealed the secret in the place of concealment, and obscured the property of the mystery between the compact (*muḥkamāt*) and the mutually resembling [verses] (*mutashābihāt*). Thus there is neither meaning nor object of knowledge in the whole (*kull*) which does not have its analogue in the part (*juz'*), even if it fades on account of its smallness. Nor is there any existent, thing, or meaning in the part except that it is a reality that points to another reality which has perfect existence in the hereafter. This is because what is in the whole is analogous to what is in the part, regardless of the disparity [that may exist] on account of [the whole's] greatness. The novice may not be capable of discerning [the correspondence between the part and the whole], and his knowledge falls short of this correspondence. Likewise, there is no secret in the mutually resembling [verses] (*mutashābihāt*) except that their root is in the compact verses (*muḥkamāt*), pointing and alluding to it as its counterpart (*naẓīr*).²⁶

Ibn Barrajān's correlative mode of thinking shaped his worldview and grounded his faith. One of the most obvious and universal correlations that he frequently discussed is the inherent imprint of beauty, harmony, and orderliness upon everything in manifestation. When Ibn Barrajān spoke of the "traces" (sing. *ithāra*) of God's names in *mā siwā Allāh*, he primarily had in mind the harmony and orderliness that permeates existence. The three loci (physical creation, revelation, and human beings) participate in the harmony that inherently issues from the divine command, through the Universal Servant, into the world. Take the

²⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyādī, I, pp. 345–346.

human being, for instance. He is orderly and beautiful in both bodily constitution and innate disposition (*fiṭra*). His body is miraculously configured, just as his soul is innately disposed to the truth, and ingrained with a guiding inner light of *fiṭra*. Like the human being, the cosmos is also inherently orderly and harmonious as evidenced in the circular planetary rotations, the interdependence of natural phenomena, or the simple perfection of a Sevillian olive tree. This innate harmony that permeates physical creation is the “Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created” (ḤMBK, more on this below). It corresponds to human *fiṭra*. Finally, revelation, like man and cosmos, is orderly and beautiful to anyone who ponders its language, hears its enchanting recitation, immerses in its infinite wisdom, or ponders its inimitable structural composition (*naẓm*). Harmony is innate to the Qur’ān, *fiṭra* is innate to the human being, and ḤMBK is innate to creation. Why? Because all three issue from the same divine fiat. They bear the “traces” of the divine names, and correspond in different modes to the Universal Servant.

Aside from the harmony that permeates the three loci, Ibn Barraĵān loved to analyze other ways in which the human being, the cosmos, and revelation correlate. The parallels between the human being and the universe are confirmed explicitly in the Qur’ān: *In the earth are signs for those having sure faith; and in your selves; what, do you not see?* (Q. 51: 20–21). In Ibn Barraĵān’s words, “the inner dimension of the Particular Servant is linked to the outer dimension of existence (*ittaṣala bāṭin al-‘abd al-juz’ī bi-zāhir al-wujūd*).”²⁷

Thus, for instance, the sensory faculties play the same role in the human body as the angels do in the macrocosm. The human senses are subservient to the intellect, just as the angels carry out their duties in perfect obedience to God. The sensory faculties are extensions of human will, just as angels are extensions of divine will. In addition, the cosmos functions like the human body since everything in the cosmos is interconnected, interdependent, and in need of divine assistance. Nothing stands on its own (*lā yaqūm bi-nafsihi*).²⁸ All entities in physical creation, just like all human organs, are interdependent: plants depend on the sun, and animals depend on plants. Similarly, the heart depends on lungs, and the limbs depend on veins, etc.

Moreover, just as the human being depends on the earth for his livelihood and would perish without it, so the earth is divinely tailored for and subjected to (*taskhīr*) the human being, and would not emerge into

²⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, IV, pp. 152–153. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 360–366.

existence except for him. The life of human beings depends on the cosmos, and the cosmos' *raison d'être* is the human being.

In addition to human-cosmic correlations, Ibn Barraġān observes multiple parallels and correspondences between the cosmos and revelation.²⁹ Just as Qur'ānic verses interlock and explain one another, and just as the consimilar (*mutashābihāt*) and compact (*muḥkamāt*) passages of the Qur'ān are mutually complementary, likewise the structure of the cosmos is interconnected and interdependent. "The world," says Ibn Barraġān, "resembles the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān the world" (*ashbaha al-ālam al-qur'ān, wa-l-qur'ān al-ālam*).³⁰ For both the Qur'ān and the natural world reveal God in different modes.

Moreover, the Qur'ānic revelation addresses the natural world and partakes in it, just as the natural world partakes in revelation and bears witness to God. Ibn Barraġān therefore often refers to the cosmos and revelation simply as the "two beings" (*al-wujūdān*),³¹ for "everything in the world is mentioned and alluded to in the Qur'ān, and vice-versa."³² Ibn Barraġān's emphasis on the revelatory aspect of nature, and the natural aspect of the Qur'ān, was expressed by later exponents of philosophical Sufism who refer to creation as the "cosmic Qur'ān" (*al-qur'ān al-takwīnī*) and revelation as the "written Qur'ān" (*al-qur'ān al-tadwīnī*). Therefore, Ibn Barraġān holds that studying the structure of the cosmos complements studying the structure Qur'ān. Cosmology advances one's understanding of the Qur'ān, just as understanding the Qur'ān increases one's grasp of the cosmos.

The Qur'ān's inter-textual connectedness is reminiscent of human anatomy as well. Every Qur'ānic verse is connected others (*ta'alluq al-ba'd bi-l-ba'd*) just as the celestial bodies or human organs are mutually dependent. In addition, just as the human being is central to the cosmos as a whole, containing all cosmic realities in nondifferentiated mode, so Sūrat al-Fātiḥa engulfs the entire message of the Qur'ān. The human

²⁹ The cosmos and revelation both unpack, or parse out the contents of the Preserved Tablet. See his discussion of the Preserved Tablet as the outward manifestation of God's nonmanifest knowledge, just as the "tablet of creation" (*lawḥ al-wujūd*) is the outward manifestation of the Preserved Tablet. From this perspective, the Qur'ān, with respect to creation, is an "inner" locus of manifestation of the Tablet. *Ibid.*, V, p. 100.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 154.

³¹ See *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 55, 101, 380; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 267, 363; and *Īdāḥ* index. Occasionally, Ibn Barraġān calls *wujūdān* "ḤMBK and revelation" (*Tanbīh*, IV, p. 256) which amounts to the same concept, since ḤMBK is the sum-total of God's signs in creation.

³² *Ibid.*, I, pp. 103, 154.

being is to the universe what the Fātiḥa is to the Qur'ān.³³ What is more, revelation, like the cosmos, is created and tailored for the human being. If it were not for the human being, God would not have disclosed the Qur'ān in the form that it is in. Conversely, if it were not for revelation, human beings would perish in this world and the next. Thus, the human being depends on revelation for salvation and guidance; and the Qur'ān only reveals itself once human beings come to be. Everything is submerged in interconnectedness, interdependence, and correlative existence. Therefore humans must seek guidance wherever it is inscribed: the book of revelation, the book of nature, and the book of the self. Such is the “guidance of innate disposition” (*hidāyat al-fiṭra*).³⁴

II THE REALITY UPON WHICH CREATION IS CREATED (ḤMBK)

So far we have analyzed Ibn Barrajān's cosmological conceptions from a top-down approach. That is, by tracing how all things descend ontologically from the Universal Servant down to the realm of *mā siwā Allāh*. But the path “to” God is bidirectional. It is possible to conceive of it by beginning with the highest realities of existence (e.g., the Universal Servant) and to descend to their lowest differentiations in revelation, creation, and the human being. Conversely, one can ascend from the differentiated particulars of creation to their highest universals. This bottom-up ascent to the divine takes the “world of creation” (*'alam al-khalq*) as its starting point.

Ibn Barrajān insists that creation intrinsically bears the touch of the divine Creator, just as an artist (lit. artisan, *ṣāni'*) inherently leaves his personal mark on his artistic productions, or an author upon his writings. The supreme calling of religion is to train the human being in the art of recognizing God's marks in creation. Just as an art connoisseur cultivates a skillful and intuitive ability to evaluate, identify, and attribute works of art to their artists on the basis of style, technique, and experience, so the Mu'tabir gradually develops a nuanced apprehension of the inimitable marks of divine artisanry. These marks (*āthār*), which are imprinted across the canvas of physical existence, revealed religion, and the human being, convey something of the qualities of God's Essence. The connoisseurship of God's traces is mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*), which enables the spiritual connoisseur to cross (*'ibra*)

³³ Ibid., I, pp. 360–366. ³⁴ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadi, I, p. 318.

through penetrative contemplation (*i'tibār*) from the outward appearance (*zāhir*) of existence to its inner (*bāṭin*) reality, and to acquire wisdom (*hikma*). The Mu'tabir nurtures an inborn (*fitrī*) human ability to recognize God in all things through a methodical process of spiritual training, inner purification, and, as Ibn Barraḡān emphasizes endlessly, practicing the "crossing from the visible to the unseen" (*'ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghā'ib*).

Ibn Barraḡān was a connoisseur of this divine art. He spent his waking hours practicing, explaining, and illustrating ways of "reading" the books of nature, revelation, and man. In the vein of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, traditional Ash'arism, and Avicennan thought, Ibn Barraḡān believed that this world is the best of all possible creations since God created it.³⁵ He never tired of reminding his pupils that creation did not emerge out of

³⁵ On the doctrine of the perfect world in Makkī, Ghazālī, Ash'arism, and the Avicennan tradition, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pp. 225–231. Ibn Barraḡān is certainly not as explicit as Ghazālī who states in the *Ihyā'* that "within [the realm of] possibility, there is nothing more wondrous than what [actually] is." (*laysa fī al-imbkān abda' mim mā kān*). Ibn Barraḡān's reasoning comes across in his commentary on the name the Wise (*al-hakīm*). He explains that existence takes place because certain names and attributes of God inherently demand loci of manifestation within the created universe. Created things are outwardly manifested possibilities of God's Essence, which nonetheless remains transcendent with respect to creation. From the perspective of the divine names, the world cannot but be what it is, since the world is a cosmic unfolding of the meanings and necessary consequences (*muqtaḍayāt*) of His names and attributes. That is to say that the world, despite being an admixture of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, is as perfect as any world could possibly be. If that were not the case, then God's attribute of wisdom (*wisdom*) would not be complete. In his words, "Everything that is in the universe must necessarily exist, and cannot be dispensed with except by an erasure by Him [on the Guarded Tablet] or a change of what He wills, through what His wills, and an erasure of what He wills, and an affirmation of what He wills. Thus, if the foolishness of fools were to diminish from the universe, He would not be completely wise, and it would be possible to speculate that its agent [i.e., the undertaker of foolishness] was like a being acting by its natural properties, just as fire exists only as a burner, and snow only as a cooler, and heavy objects descend and fall, and light objects ascend. Because of [God's] perfection, He embraces all things in power, knowledge, mercy, forbearance, wisdom, and ordinance. He bestows existence on a thing and its opposite, and He creates the partner and its pair. *He created everything then measured it out with a measuring* (Q. 25:2) . . . God bestows existence upon the good by His Self, and for His Self (*awjad al-khayr bi-nafsihi li-nafsihi*). That is the reason why He loves [the good], is pleased with it, draws it near [to Him], and makes promises [to those who act upon] it. He bestows existence upon evil by His power; not His Self, but rather by His wisdom, will, and perfection . . . In short, if the expression 'wisdom' expresses the knower's knowledge of the most excellent objects of knowledge by the most excellent knowledge, and His predetermination of the predetermined things by the best predetermination, and His sending forth of the objects of knowledge by the most meticulous sending forth, and the most excellent artisanry, then He is the truly Wise" (*Sharḥ*, II, pp. 230–232. See also

nonexistence in vain, and that God *did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, in play* (*lā 'ibīn*). Rather, the world was fashioned according to an orderly, harmonious, cohesive, and beautiful design. For as the Qur'ān concisely puts it, *We did not create the heavens and the earth except upon the ḥaqq* (Q. 44:38–39). This *bi-l-ḥaqq*,³⁶ says Ibn Barrajān, is the sum total of the “traces” (*ithāra*), “pathways” (*masālik*), or inherent “requirements” (*sing. muqtaḍā*) of God’s names and attributes in the cosmos, in the Qur'ān, and in the human being. It is important to stress that this *ḥaqq* is not God the Real per se.³⁷ Yet it contrasts with *khalq*, creation, and represents God’s presence in creation. The Qur'ānic *ḥaqq* is “protological”; it stands at the origin of all things (*makhlūq bihi*). Yet, as we shall see below, it is also eschatological, for it stands at the end all things (*al-ḥaqq al-ladhī ilayhi al-maṣīr*) and is the final manifestation of God who was there from the beginning.³⁸

Ibn Barrajān most commonly refers to this pervasive *ḥaqq* as the Reality-Upon-Which-the-Heavens-And-the-Earth-Are-Created (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-samāwāt wa-l-ard*), abbreviated by Ibn 'Arabī as *al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*, henceforth HMBK). HMBK is not merely one of many ways of conceiving of or accessing the Real in physical

his discussion on page 234 where Ibn Barrajān argues that since God is the Acceptor of Repentance, humans must necessarily sin and repent, otherwise they would not exist).

³⁶ The word *ḥaqq*, like the Qur'ānic expression *bi-l-ḥaqq*, is ambiguous, polysemic, and occurs in a variety of contexts in the Qur'ān (see Q. 6:151, 7:43, 7:53, 7:89, 7:159, 7:181, 8:5, 10:5, 15:55, 15:64, 15:85, 16:3, 16:102, 17:105, 18:13, 21:112, 23:41, 25:68, 29:44, 30:8, 44:39, 46:3). Translating HMBK as “The Reality Through Which Creation is Created” is somewhat misleading. First, *Ḥaqq* in the Qur'ān, and in particular in Ibn Barrajān’s usage of HMBK, has a wide range of meanings, including not only reality and truth, but harmony and equilibrium. In the Qur'ān, *ḥaqq* can also mean due, correctness, law, wisdom, and justice. The expression *bi-l-ḥaqq* relates to words like truth, reality, confirmed, binding, authentic, genuine, sound, valid, substantial, real, fact, necessary, requisite, unavoidable, binding, obligatory, incumbent, necessarily existing by His own essence (applied to God). For Ibn Barrajān, the *ḥaqq* in question encompasses all of these meanings, and is not exclusively an ontological category (see his discussion of the meanings of *ḥaqq* in *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, II, 499–500). Second, the “*Ḥaqq* ‘Through Which’ Creation is inherently Created” over-emphasizes HMBK as a cosmogonic reality that is active agent in the process of creation. HMBK is the “reality/equilibrium upon which (or according to which) creation is created.” For Ibn Barrajān himself sometimes refers to HMBK as *al-ḥaqq al-ladhī faṭara al-khalīqa kullahā 'alayhi*, “The Reality Upon Which He Cleaved All of Creation” (*Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 120). See ft. 42 for other variants of HMBK in Ibn Barrajān’s works.

³⁷ This comes out in Ibn Barrajān use of language in that he never follows the word *ḥaqq* by a formulaic expression such as “*al-ḥaqq ta 'ālā*” (The Real be He exalted).

³⁸ For references to *al-ḥaqq al-ladhī ilayhi al-maṣīr*, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 317; *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, 124, 140, 299; and *Īdāḥ* index.

creation. It is, rather, the only means by which God can be known therein. For in the final analysis, we only have access to God's presence in creation through ḤMBK. God can only be known by us through His exalted attributes (*ṣifāt 'ulā*), which in turn are accessed through His beautiful names (*asmā' ḥusnā*), which in turn are grasped through their traces (*āthār*) in *mā siwā Allāh* – the sum total of which is denoted by this Qur'ānic *ḥaqq*.³⁹ He proclaims that

ḤMBK is to existent things like a point is to a line: it begins with it, and is connected through it, and ends with it.⁴⁰

The idea of ḤMBK, which later exponents of philosophical Sufism identify with the preexistential root of all existence, or the “Reality of Realities” (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*), has its origins in the writings of the Brethren,⁴¹ and possibly Tustarī's understanding of divine equilibrium and justice (*'adl*).⁴² For Ibn Barrajan, the reality of ḤMBK is so pervasive

³⁹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 194–195. ⁴⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 180.

⁴¹ Ebstein first identified this link in *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, pp. 46, 55–56, 72, 116, 161. See the Brethren's *al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a* (The Comprehensive Epistle), pp. 281–282, where the doctrine of ḤMBK is described as being at the heart of the Brethren's teachings. This term appears in scattered expositions throughout the *Risāla al-jāmi'a*.

⁴² Massignon (*The Passion*, p. 113) and Gharminī (*Al-Madāris*, pp. 124–126) point out on the basis of Ibn 'Arabī's comments in the *Futūḥāt* (see III, p. 91) that Tustarī's concept of *'adl* is synonymous with Ibn Barrajan's doctrine of ḤMBK. I have not been able to confirm the affinity between Tustarī's notion of *'adl* and Ibn Barrajan's ḤMBK independently of Ibn 'Arabī's writings. In his *Tafsīr*, Tustarī discusses the term *'adl* generically to denote divine justice (see his interpretations of Q. 2:48, 3:28, 3:64, 16:90) and not in a technical sense that would complement Ibn Barrajan's understanding of ḤMBK. It is possible that Tustarī developed his understanding of *'adl* in other works. It is interesting to note that Ibn Barrajan uses the term *al-'adl al-maftūr 'alayhi al-khalq* (*Sharḥ*, II, pp. 245–247), and that Ibn 'Arabī also collapses Tustarī's *'adl* and Ibn Barrajan's ḤMBK in the expression *al-'adl al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq* (*Futūḥāt*, III, p. 86). Furthermore, the term *'adl* in Ibn Barrajan's *Sharḥ* denotes not only justice but God's balancing equilibrium, equity, and inherent wisdom in creation (*'adl al-ḥikma*) (See *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 391–392 for a discussion of *'adl* where Tustarī is even cited). Ibn Barrajan explains that just as the majority of God's names are correlative opposites (e.g., the Guide and the Misguide; the Exalter and the Abaser) whose properties become manifest in creation in a balanced proportion, likewise He balances His prescriptions (*taklīf*) and bestowals of gifts (*'atā*), punishments and rewards, trials and ease. This balance is a manifestation of God's pervasive *'adl*, that is, His “balancing” and “proportioning” (*taswiya*), and “determining” (*taqdīr*) of all things with equity (*qist*) in creation. Ibn Barrajan also connects this understanding of *'adl* to (1) God's “sitting” (*istiwā*) and “proportioning” (*taswiya*) on the throne; and (2) his concept of *ḥaqq* and ḤMBK as the inherent harmony and equilibrium in God's creation. See *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 291–292; II, pp. 169, 216–217, 224, 262. Ibn 'Arabī takes Ibn Barrajan's teachings a step further by equating ḤMBK and *'adl* with the uncreated reality of Muḥammad (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*,

that it only stops short of existence (*wujūd*) itself. It is such a broad conceptual category that it is difficult (though not impossible) to grasp. ḤMBK is the all-encompassing totality (*jumla jāmi'a*) of the denotations (*dalā'il*), revelations, messengers, and signs of God in the heavens and the earth.⁴³ It is the sum total of the qualities of the divine names in existence. It is God's disclosure of His names and qualities by way of the Universal Servant, in the present moment, throughout creation.

In more theological terms, ḤMBK can be explained as follows: God in His infinite unity, majesty, and beauty would only decree that which is harmonious and beautiful. The divine command, which is an extension of God's Essence, is a projection of His qualities and attributes. ḤMBK issues from the divine command (*'ālam al-amr*) and permeates the visible world (*'ālam al-shahāda*).⁴⁴ In Ibn Barraġān's words, divine unity therefore is the "fountainhead" (*yanbū'*) of ḤMBK.⁴⁵ Thus, like the Universal Servant, ḤMBK does not entirely belong to created existence. "It is not in the way of created things" (*laysa 'alā makhlūq*), but rather reflects the divine names and qualities in creation. ḤMBK stands at the junction of this world and the next, and there is a direct ontological link (*ittiṣāl*) between both.⁴⁶ While divine *ḥaqq* and created *khalq* are diametrically opposed, ḤMBK is *ḥaqq* clothed in the forms of *khalq*. It is the bridge between the *ḥaqq-khalq* binary, and as such it is neither immersed in creation nor in eternity.

The foregoing discussion of ḤMBK is closely reminiscent of our earlier analysis of the Universal Servant. How then does ḤMBK differ from, and relate ontologically to the Universal Servant? The answer to this question is, as far as I can ascertain, never explicitly articulated by Ibn Barraġān. Three remarks can be put forth. First, the Universal Servant and ḤMBK are both "totalities" that signal God and yet are subsumed under His command (*amr*). From the divine standpoint, God looks upon the world *through* the Universal Servant. From the human standpoint, we anticipate the vision of God *through* ḤMBK. Thus while the Universal Servant is situated between God as such and creation as such, ḤMBK occupies a position below the Universal Servant since it permeates creation and

lit. "Reality of Realities"), that is, the preexistential idea of creation within the divine intellect through which the cosmos is created. This association made by Ibn 'Arabī, which is not obvious from Ibn Barraġān's own writings, is reiterated by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā, d. 1050/1640) in the *Asfār* (II, p. 328). See Küçük, "Light upon light, Part II" p. 392, for further discussion and references.

⁴³ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 276–277. ⁴⁴ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 166.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 277. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 37.

embraces the reality of all things in differentiated (*mufaṣṣal*) and nondifferentiated mode (*mujmal*).

Second, ḤMBK expresses the intrinsic harmoniousness, equilibrium, symbolic significance, and beauty of the created world. It is thus an outward manifestation (*ẓāhir*) of the intrinsic, nonmanifest (*bāṭin*) and nondifferentiated qualities contained in the Universal Servant. For the Universal Servant is a precosmic reality that gives form to all forms, and is itself fashioned upon God's form. It intrinsically reflects the qualities of His names and attributes. ḤMBK thus belongs more to the side of creation, whereas the Universal Servant stands clearly above it. ḤMBK is that positive aspect of *this* world which points to God's names and to the hereafter. For in Ibn Barraĵān's way of looking at things, everything in this world is either a sign of God's presence, or of His absence. The tapestry of creation is woven out of contrasts. Good and evil, beauty and ugliness, love and hate, faith and unbelief, virtue and vice, and so on, are all threads that run through the world and are indicative of the hereafter. Those positive signs are ḤMBK:

The world is divided into two parts: remembrance (*dhikr*) and trial (*fitna*). The part of trial is the antichrist (*dajjāl*) which is the greatest [trial], and which is like a center-pole from which all trials branch out. The part of the remembrance is ḤMBK, wherein there is no trial, and which is like a center-pole for remembrance, from which all remembrance branches out.⁴⁷

Finally, the Universal Servant is a protological reality ('in the beginning'). It marks the preexistential origin of creation. ḤMBK, for its part, anticipates an eschatological ('in the end') reality and looks 'ahead'. It heralds God's supreme Self-Disclosure on Judgment Day and the inevitable return of all things to their divine origin (more on this below). Given the wide-ranging, and literally all-encompassing, nature of the doctrine of ḤMBK, discussions of this teaching recur throughout Ibn Barraĵān's writings, in countless contexts, and are difficult to pinpoint. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to state that his central preoccupation throughout his extant oeuvre is to shed light on his doctrine of ḤMBK. Bearing testimony to ḤMBK is the "loftiest assertion of divine unity" (*al-tawḥīd al-'alī*), the "eye of certainty" (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) mentioned in the Qur'ān, and a foretaste of paradise.⁴⁸ Whether one calls it ḤMBK or otherwise, it remains a fundamental article of faith that is incumbent upon every believer. True belief entails an affirmation of "God, His angels,

⁴⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyādī, IV, p. 212. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 365–366.

revealed book, messengers, the last day, and *ḤMBK with everything it encompasses.*"⁴⁹

Like most of Ibn Barrajān's doctrines, *ḤMBK* bears various technical titles, all of which indicate his understanding of *ḤMBK* not as a separate creative principle or a cosmogonic reality that acts as a Neoplatonic demiurge out of which creation emerges.⁵⁰ Rather, the doctrine of *ḤMBK* is the broadest possible way of speaking of the orderly nature of God's creative power, and the sum total of the traces of the divine names. Pondering and grasping this pervasive cosmic *ḥaqq* is an intellectual-spiritual ascension into the realities of the hereafter, and complements the divine descent through the Universal Servant. In the following quote, Ibn Barrajān lists a few among the myriad implications of the doctrine of *ḤMBK*:⁵¹

God only created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them *bi-l-ḥaqq*, and this *ḥaqq* consists of the pathways of the meanings of His names and attributes in the world, and everything that points to the existence of the next world and its components, and that which He obliged us to bear witness to, namely the coming of the Hour with appointed times and designated periods, and that the recompense will necessarily and undoubtedly take place, and the attributes of the recompense, and knowledge of the spring-source of the [hidden] treasures, and knowledge of the spring-source of revealed Laws, and those things that are affirmed by the foundations of Islam, and discernment between what is permissible and the forbidden therein.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., III, p. 507.

⁵⁰ This *Ḥaqq* in Massignon's words is "a demiurge, a first divine causative emanation," (*The Passion*, p. 113). Although none of these titles are easily woven into a sentence, Ibn Barrajān insists on using the entire formula repeatedly. Sometimes, he refers to it as "*ḥaqq* upon which the world is fashioned/cleaved" (*Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 56) (*al-ḥaqq al-maftūr 'alayhi al-'ālam*) or "the *ḥaqq* that permeates the world and receives existence from God's names and attributes" (*al-ḥaqq al-mabthūth fī al-'ālam al-mawjūd 'an asmā' Allāh wa-ṣifātibi fīhi*) (*Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 172). Elsewhere one finds the simpler expression "the *ḥaqq* that permeates the world" (*Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 338) (*al-ḥaqq al-mabthūth fī al-'ālam*). Occasionally, Ibn Barrajān refers to *ḤMBK* as "the *ḥaqq* upon which He made all of creation" (*al-ḥaqq al-ladbī faṭara al-khalīqa kullahā 'alayhi*) (*Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 120). For discussions of *ḤMBK*, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 43, 52, 58, 61, 74, 101, 109, 130, 195, 212, 241, 277, 291; II, pp. 19–22, 54, 56, 99, 124, 163, 166, 190, 338–339; *Tanbih*, I, p. 112, 124, 128, 353–354, 360; See also *Iḍāb* index.

⁵¹ The one notable exception to this is in the last quarter of the *Tanbih*, where discussions occur less frequently as if to signal that the reader has understood this teaching. Toward the end of the *Tanbih* when Ibn Barrajān comes across verse Q 64:3, *We created the heavens and the earth bi-l-ḥaqq*, he states that "we have already spoken of this to the utmost of our ability." Ibid., V, p. 343.

⁵² Ibid., IV, p. 12.

In typical fashion, Ibn Barraġān makes full use of the mythic language of the Qur'ān to explain, anchor, and buttress each of his teachings. He reminds his reader that the Qur'ān enjoins the believer repeatedly to seek knowledge of the creation of the heavens and earth (e.g. Q. 88:18–20), and most of the Islamic revelation is devoted to recalling God's signs in the world. In fact the central purpose of many sūras, including the all-important Sūra 55 (al-Rahmān) is to remind the reader of ḤMBK, hence the repeated refrain *So which of the graces of your Lord do you deny?*⁵³ From this perspective, Ibn Barraġān's doctrine of ḤMBK is a direct response to this Qur'ānic invitation to contemplate God's creation⁵⁴ and to recall that the things of this world are signs of those in the next, and that everything is a sign of God. Moreover, as Ibn Barraġān often states, it was Abraham, the "supreme Mu'tabir" (*sayyid al-mu'tabirīn*), who first recognized ḤMBK. He arrived at the knowledge of divine unity by pondering the celestial heavens which he expressed in his proclamation to his father: *there has come to me knowledge which has not come to thee* (Q. 19:43).⁵⁵ Finally, it should be noted that Ibn Barraġān insists that the doctrine of ḤMBK is explicitly articulated in the Qur'ānic verse, *And God created the heavens and the earth according to the reality ([of ḤMBK] bi-l-ḥaqq), so that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned* (Q. 45:22). The first half of this verse denotes ḤMBK, the world of the names and attributes. The second denotes the consequences of ḤMBK, namely religion, prophecy, and the innate disposition of all things (*fiṭra*) to God.⁵⁶

ḤMBK Heralds the Clear Reality (*al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*)

ḤMBK anticipates God's disclosure on Judgment Day.⁵⁷ This dramatic theophanic event in which God reveals His full glory to believers is known as the "Supreme Self-Disclosure" (*al-tajallī al-'alī*). God's self-disclosure is never beheld directly by believers in the herebelow since humans are engulfed in veils of gross material existence. These obstructing veils will be rent apart on Judgment Day *when the heavens will be transformed to other than the heavens and the earth* (Q. 24:25). Like other exegetes, Ibn Barraġān commonly refers to the divine theophany in the hereafter

⁵³ *Īdāb*, ¶913. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶151 ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶288 ⁵⁶ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 339.

⁵⁷ *Īdāb*, ¶361.

as *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*, the Clear *Ḥaqq*.⁵⁸ What distinguishes his discussions of the Clear *Ḥaqq* from other exegetical works is that he ties it to his understanding of ḤMBK. For all professions of faith (*shahādāt*) are anticipations of that fundamental, fully realized, and archetypal *tête-à-tête* on Judgment Day and in this sense, ḤMBK is a foretaste of paradise.⁵⁹ Bearing witness to ḤMBK in this world anticipates the testimony of God as the Clear Reality in the next, which is the “mother and pillar of all professions of faith” (*umm/umdat al-shahādāt*).⁶⁰ In Ibn Barrajān’s words:

ḤMBK in this world will be replaced by *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn* [in the next]. [Al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn] is ḤMBK in the here-below radiating the light of that *ḥaqq al-mubīn*.⁶¹

The term “the Clear Reality” is, predictably, derived from a literal reading of several Qur’ānic statements which relate that *on the Day of Judgment man will know that God is al-ḥaqq al-mubīn* (e.g. Q. 24:25).⁶² Moreover, Ibn Barrajān finds reference to this doctrine in what is perhaps his favorite and most oft-repeated ḥadīth report about the Clear Reality: “You will see your Lord just as you see the full moon at night, and just as you see the sun at noon when there is no cloud beneath it.”⁶³ ḤMBK thus anticipates the Clear Reality in this world. Ibn Barrajān also stresses that the Supreme Self-Disclosure of God is not

⁵⁸ Ibn Barrajān occasionally employs the term *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn* synonymously with another Qur’ān-inspired expression, “*Ḥaqq To Whom is the Return*” (*al-ḥaqq al-ladhī ilayhi al-maṣīr*). The two terms are virtually synonymous, differing only in emphasis. “The *Ḥaqq To Whom is the Return*” specifically calls to mind the impending nature and certainty of the divine self-disclosure in the hereafter (Ibid., ¶60).

⁵⁹ Ibid., ¶235. ⁶⁰ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 113. ⁶¹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 391.

⁶² Ibn Barrajān also plays on the ambiguity of the term *mubīn*, which, like *ḥaqq*, carries several shades of meaning. Not only is *mubīn* manifest or most-evident, it is also the most *evidencing* reality (*al-ḥaqq al-mubayyin*). *Mubīn* is the piercing discrimination and discernment between truth and falsehood. The implication for Ibn Barrajān is obvious: the divine self-disclosure, or *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*, is self-evident through its signs, demonstrations, and witnesses in ḤMBK. Ibn Barrajān emphasizes the all-encompassing nature and centrality of the divine adjective *mubīn*. God is not only the Manifest Reality, but also the Manifest God (*ilāh mubīn*), Manifest Lord, Manifest King, and so on for every divine name. That is, God’s self-disclosure is *mubīn* from every conceivable aspect. *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 23.

⁶³ Bukhārī, #554, #7435; Muslim, #633. Given the centrality of such verses and ḥadīth statements to Ibn Barrajān’s thought system, Ibn Barrajān devotes an entire section of his *Sharḥ* to discussing verse 24:25: *Upon that day God will pay them in full their just due, and they shall know that God is the Clear Reality* (Ibid., II, p. 21), and countless discussions of this verse and the aforementioned ḥadīth report feature in his two Qur’ānic commentaries.

an occurrence that takes place “in the future.” It is a continuous process of regeneration occurring here and now. God, *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*, gives reality to HMBK in this world (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn, ay al-mubayyin al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*). That is, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn* “actualizes the reality of HMBK” (*mubīqq al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi*).⁶⁴ The only difference between the present moment and God’s final self-disclosure is that the veils between God and creation are removed on that decisive day. For “there is no repetition in God’s self-disclosure” (*lā takrār fī al-tajallī*).⁶⁵ That is, God’s self-disclosure is unique in every particular moment, and at the same time it remains always fundamentally one and the same.

III ONTOLOGY: ONE WUJŪD, TWO WORLDS, MULTIPLE LEVELS

Between *Tanzīh* of the Ash’arīs and *Tashbīh* of the Anthropomorphists

Ibn Barrajan conceived of all of existence (*wujūd*) as a unitary whole with no independent parts. He held the cosmos to be an ontological and almost physical extension of the hereafter. In his oft-repeated words, this world is a “bundle yanked out of the next world” (*jadhba judhibat min al-ākhirā*). The next world is *present* in the visible world, or “in the [soft] belly of this world” (*fī baṭn al-arḍ*).⁶⁶ Man dwells on the hardened “back” or outward aspect of this world (*ẓahr*), whose soft “belly” or inward aspect (*baṭn*) is the hereafter. To use a different imagery, the outward dimension of the world is an offshoot, or a “branch” (*farʿ*), of the root (*aṣl*) of the hereafter.⁶⁷ But the two worlds are not on par with each other. For this world is “deficient (*nāqīṣa*), and . . . its fulfillment is the hereafter.”⁶⁸ The next world is ontologically superior, more real (*ziyādatan fī al-wujūd*) and nobler (*akram wujūdan*) than this world.⁶⁹ Despite their “ontological resemblance” (*tashābuh al-wujūd*), the herebelow is merely a tiny prison in relation to the hereafter.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 257.

⁶⁵ For discussions of *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 37, 138–139, 410; II, pp. 19–21, 23, 113, 358; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 68, 243, 313–314, 377; II, pp. 77, 249–54, 497–499, 510; III, pp. 44, 171, 380, 428, 496–497, 137–138, 222, 250, 256, 296, 306–307; V, pp. 81, 194–195, 282; see also *Īdāh* index.

⁶⁶ *Īdāh*, ¶559 ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶559 ⁶⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 50. ⁶⁹ *Īdāh*, ¶8, 116.

⁷⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 63.

Was Ibn Barraġān a “monist”? This term is often evoked in discussions about the Philosophical-Sufi doctrine of “unity of being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) that is often attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. “Monism” does not apply to Ibn Barraġān since it implies an existential or substantial unity extending from the divine to material beings in an unbroken ontological continuum. A “monist” maintains that God and creation form an ontological, unitary whole sharing in one ultimate substance. In contrast, Ibn Barraġān posits that there is an existential continuity between this world (*dunyā*) and the next (*ākhirā*), and that God radically transcends this continuity. Ibn Barraġān’s ontology is thus not “monist,” and more “dualist” in the sense that he insists that God transcends the created realm (*mā siwā Allāh*).

For Ibn Barraġān, the sufficient proof for the ontological continuity between the two worlds lies in a faithful, and what I call “hyperliteral” reading of Ḥadīth literature. When the Prophet proclaimed that “between my home and my pulpit is a garden from among the gardens of paradise,” what else could he have possibly meant?⁷¹ Ibn Barraġān was convinced that his ontological framework is the most faithful and profound way to understand the Prophet’s awareness of celestial and infernal realities, which he expressed in countless aḥādīth wherein religious and natural landmarks like the northern Medinan mountain of Uḥud or the courtyard in his own mosque are identified with paradise itself. Conversely, the Prophet saw other natural landmarks such as the small southern-Medinan mount of ‘Īr as infernal. These references lose their meaning without a coherent ontology grounded in a hyperliteral reading of scripture. Among Ibn Barraġān’s favorite Prophetic statements in support of his ontology is the following: “This world in relation to the next is like a finger that is dipped into a river: behold how much it draws from it.”⁷² His description of the world as an ontological “bundle yanked out of the next world” (*jadhba judhibat min al-ākhirā*) is a paraphrase of this ḥadīth.

For Ibn Barraġān, any honest and faithful reading of such prophetic reports – and they are numerous – uncovers profound secrets about the nature of existence and its relation to the hereafter. Without an ontological hermeneutic that posits an unbroken continuum in the chain of being, hundreds of such scriptural passages would either give way to anthropomorphism (*tajsīm*) à la Ahl al-Ḥadīth, or would be

⁷¹ Bukhārī, #1195; Muslim, #1390. See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 143–144.

⁷² Muslim, #2858; Ibn Ḥanbal, #18008. See *Īdāh*, ¶116.

incomprehensible (*ta'ṭīl, bilā kayf*) or subject to metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*), as the scholastic theologians maintain.

Ibn Barraḡān's mystical hyperliteralism is an alternative to both literal and metaphorical readings of Islam's holy texts. Instead of resorting to metaphor or confining himself to the plain sense of the text, Ibn Barraḡān opted for a hyperliteral reading that undercuts the theological literalism promulgated by Andalusī Mālikīs on the one hand, and the rationalist worldview upheld by the newly established Andalusī Ash'arīs (*mutakallimūn*) on the other. Neither of the two perspectives sat well with him. For the Mālikī theological literalists were so bent on their anti-intellectual approach to scripture that they sometimes indulged in crude anthropomorphism (*tajsīm*), while the theologians sought to uphold the incomparability (*tanzīh*) of God and the hereafter to such a degree that they either declare the intellect to be ineffectual (*ta'ṭīl, bilā kayf*) in the face of seemingly problematic scriptural passages, or they venture into far-fetched metaphorical interpretive gymnastics (*ta'wīl*) that reduce God and heavenly realities to an inaccessible philosophical abstract. It is true that the transcendentalism of the Ash'arīs (and Mu'tazila before them) emerged largely in reaction to the crude interpretations of Ahl al-Ḥadīth, theological literalists, and other early groups who posited an identical physical relationality between the divine, the hereafter, and the herebelow on scriptural grounds. The *mujassima* were guilty of the heresy of *tashbīh* (declaring similarity) by imposing corporeality upon God and heaven. In response, the theologians attempted to avoid the pitfall of *tashbīh* by overemphasizing *tanzīh* (dissimilarity). But from Ibn Barraḡān's perspective, both the anthropomorphists and the theologians represent extreme confinements of religious discourse. The former ultimately accept a corporeal divinity, while the latter reduce religion to a dry scoreboard of do's and don'ts by imposing impermeable boundaries between this world and the next, stressing excessive transcendentalism, and taking recourse to *bilā kayf* at every turn.

The ontological worldview and hyperliteral hermeneutics developed by the Andalusī Mu'tabirūn, and most articulately by Ibn Barraḡān, arose as a response to these two entrenched perspectives. In effect, Ibn Barraḡān did not accept the theologians' transcendentalism as a solution to anthropomorphism, because the theologians set up a divide between this world and the next to the point of incomprehensibility and inaccessibility. Ibn Barraḡān attempted a midway between the crude corporealism (*tajsīm*) of the Andalusī Mālikī literalists on the one hand, and the radical transcendentalism of his Ash'arī contemporaries on the other. He understood

this world in relation to the next, and defended his position through hyperliteral interpretations of scripture.

In a sense, Ibn Barrajan's solution amounts to a direct inversion of the anthropomorphist worldview: while anthropomorphists see heaven as a prolongation of the world, Ibn Barrajan sees the world as a prolongation of heaven. That is, he does not consider heaven to be analogous to the world, but the world to be analogous to heaven. Ibn Barrajan begins with "heavenly matter" and "yanks" corporeal matter "out of it". He locates Paradise, which itself consists of multiple levels,⁷³ above the seven high heavens (*al-samāwāt al-'ulā*), and locates hell beneath the seven earths (*al-araḍīn al-sab'*). These seven stories above and below in fact collapse on the Day of Judgment and are *rolled up* like a scrolls *in God's right hand* (Q. 67:39, 21:104), so that paradise occupies the upper face of the earth, while hell occupies the lower face of the earth.⁷⁴ The interconnectedness of these worlds is therefore confirmed by a hyperliteral reading of the verse: *Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens* (Q. 14:48) and He says: *And Paradise shall be brought forward for the godfearing, and Hell advanced for the perverse.* (Q. 26:90–91).⁷⁵

In the end, Ibn Barrajan did not conceive of "matter" as a physical entity independent of the next world. Matter is real only insofar as it is an extension of heaven. "This world is a bundle yanked out of the next world" since it shares the same substance as the next. In sum, Ibn Barrajan sees this world as heavenly. The anthropomorphist sees heaven as worldly. As for the theologian, he maintains that heaven is heaven, creation is creation, and never the twain shall meet.

Scriptural Proof-Texts for Ibn Barrajan's Ontology

The Hidden Object (al-khab')

Ibn Barrajan marshals many hyperliteral proof-texts in support of his hierarchical ontology. In each case, he highlights an image from scripture and gives it ontological weight. For instance, he interprets Qur'anic accounts of apocalyptic destruction, such as *the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth* (Q. 14:48) to denote that the next world

⁷³ In paradise there are ascending "high places" or "degrees of loftiness" (*'illiyūn*, Q. 83:19; for a discussion of the term, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, I, pp. 115–116). The highest paradise is called Firdaws ("paradise" Q. 23:11; see *Ibid.*, IV, p. 85).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 569–570. ⁷⁵ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 313.

not only exists in the future, but here and now, on a different level of reality.⁷⁶ Ibn Barrajān also finds reference for his ontology in the doctrine of the Hidden Object (*al-khab'*) that he develops extensively in his tafsīrs.⁷⁷ The Qur'ān states: *He brings out what is hidden in the heavens and the earth* (Q. 27:25). This “hidden object” (*khab'*) is “ontologized” by Ibn Barrajān and denotes many concepts. From one perspective, it is ḤMBK, or the meanings and realities of the names and attributes that are indicated by the signs (*āyāt*).⁷⁸ But more importantly, the *khab'* denotes, (1) a preexistential creation in God’s knowledge, which comes into existence when He says “Be” (*kun*) to it. The water underneath the throne of God symbolizes this first *khab'*; (2) that aspect of the next world which becomes manifest in this world. Ibn Barrajān laments the loss of knowledge of the *khab'*.

He who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and earth. (Q. 27:25) The hidden thing (*khab'*), although knowledge of it is hugely vast, goes back to two types, and only God knows what is behind them. The first is that He hid water in His treasures, and He hid within the water the things to which water is employed . . . *Naught is there, but its treasures are with Us* (Q. 15:21). When God wants to give existence to a thing, He says *be* to it and it emerges into existence just as He desires. The second and greatest of all types of *khab'* is God’s hiding the hereafter in this world, so when one of us dies he emerges into it. The Prophet said: “the Garden is closer to one of you than the straps on his sandals, and so is the Fire.”⁷⁹ God hid the Garden in the skies and the earth, and He hid the Fire underneath the earths, and within the earths, and *Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens* (Q. 14:48) He will reveal it to them directly.⁸⁰

The doctrine of *khab'* is central to Ibn Barrajān’s thought because it emerges directly out of the Qur’ān and roots his ontology in concrete Qur’ānic imagery. It is discussed so often in his extant works that the author assumes the reader’s understanding of this idea in most passages.

⁷⁶ For discussions of Q 14:48 in *Īdāh*, see ¶ 218, 361, 548, 559, 598, 636, 750, 888, 898, 1001, 1063, 1076.

⁷⁷ For discussions of *khab'* in *Īdāh*, see ¶ 38, 189, 207, 227, 307, 342, 343, 361, 390, 557, 638, 655, 668, 670, 683, 855, 939, 1001, 1017, 1151.

⁷⁸ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 124. ⁷⁹ Bukhārī, #6488.

⁸⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 235. The following quote is relevant as well: “All of existence was hidden in His knowledge, power, and desire, and God’s mentioning of the throne points to the fact that all of existence comes under the mighty throne because it encompasses all of existence. Also, all of existence was hidden in the water under the throne, and all of existence on that day was in a state of original undifferentiation (*murtaqq*).” *Tanbīh*, IV, p. 236.

The Two Breaths (nafasayn/fayḥayn)

Ibn Barraḡān also finds scriptural attestation for his ontology in relevant aḥādīth. One of the most prominent references is his recurring discussion of “The Two Breaths” (*fayḥayn*), an idea that originates in the following sound ḥadīth:

Hellfire complained to its Lord, saying, “O Lord, part of me is consuming the other part.” So he granted it two breaths, one breath in winter and one breath in summer, such that it will be the most severe you will find of heat and the most severe you will find of cold.⁸¹

Based on this ḥadīth, Ibn Barraḡān experienced seasonal cycles and variations in temperature as direct openings onto the world of the unseen. He attributed the dynamic of constant opposition in nature, and especially summer heat, winter cold, and cool spring breeze, to the actual opening and closing of the gates of heaven and hell. Ibn Barraḡān also emphasized that the four basic elements that make up physical existence (*al-uṣūl al-arbaʿ* air, fire, earth, water) derive from the Opening (*fathḥ*) of heaven, and the Scorching (*fayḥ*) of Hell. He believed that the balanced fusion of these elements account for the diversity of forms and phenomena in the world.⁸²

A Philosophical Explanation: Imaginal Existence
(*al-wujūd al-mithālī*)

Ibn Barraḡān typically grounds his understanding of the ontological unity of the two worlds in scripture. However, he also occasionally alludes to the concept of *al-wujūd al-mithālī*, which is a more philosophical explanation that prefigures Ibn ʿArabī’s doctrine of the imaginal realm (*ʿālam al-khayāl/mithāl*).⁸³ Underpinning Ibn Barraḡān’s concept of “imaginal

⁸¹ Bukhārī, #537, #3260; Muslim, #617.

⁸² *Ibid.*, II, pp. 114–115. For discussions of *nafasayn / fayḥayn*, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 206–207, 259; II, pp. 35, 79; *Tanbīḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 53, 82, 504; II, pp. 114, 116, 508; III, pp. 368, 425; IV, pp. 41–42, 48–49, 90, 160, 179, 482–483, 488–489; V, pp. 143, 220–221, 241, 260, 277, 440; and *Īdāḥ* index.

⁸³ Figures after Ibn ʿArabī preferred to employ the word *khayāl* rather than *mithāl* in such discussions. Although this may be a tenuous link, there are references to the idea of continuous existence in the works of Ibn Sīnā, who was known only to some extent to sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī scholars, and whose works were much less influential in al-Andalus at this period than they were in the East. See *al-Najāt*, Book III, pp. 291–298. A parallel passage is found in the *Shifāʿ*. See Ibn Sīnā’s *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, pp. 347–357. (I am grateful to William Chittick for bringing these passages to my attention.)

existence” is an attempt at addressing the philosophical problem posed by the fact that everything in existence is in a constant state of change. If everything changes and disappears, how then does God recover it? The archetypal image, or *mithāl*, of a created thing is never annihilated. Only the created aspect of a thing is susceptible to annihilation and thus goes out of existence. The imaginal existence of Ibn Barraĵān’s is constantly fixed in a place of subtle existence. The image of a created thing is not only in God’s knowledge of it, but also occupies an intermediary existence between divine knowledge and corporeality. In effect, nothing real ever disappears, for its image always remains.

Philosophical discussions of *al-wujūd al-mithālī* only occur a handful of times in Ibn Barraĵān’s works. In fact, this philosophical discussion is quite extraneous to Ibn Barraĵān’s thought system, and is never fully integrated into the pattern of his teachings. Given Ibn Barraĵān’s broad selection of uncited sources, there is little reason to suspect that discussions of imaginal existence is a later gloss added by someone inspired by Ibn ‘Arabī, since it is found in several passages throughout Ibn Barraĵān’s works and can be traced back to one of the earliest witnesses of the *Tanbīh* which was copied from the original MS.⁸⁴

In the following passage, Ibn Barraĵān provides an explanation of the next world in terms of images (*mithālāt*). He stresses that existence is more real in heaven than in this world. Heavenly existence is neither spiritual nor corporeal, but an imaginal intermediary. His description of imaginal existence is comparable to a cosmic backup disk that is transferred into the afterlife. All things are backed up by imaginal existence which is continuous. Nothing real is ever lost of imaginal existence. The subtle existence that supports the reality of things never disappears, and that is the reality that appears on the day of resurrection. In Qur’ānic language, the preserved book (*kitāb ḥafīẓ*) that embraces the reality of all things embodies imaginal existence. The fruits of the hereafter are not imaginal existence itself, but are derived from it and are similar to it. On day of resurrection, *earth will be changed to other than the earth and the heavens*. Heavens here is the realm of invisibles, the angels, and the unseen, whereas earth is the physical world. Both are transformed at the resurrection:

Every imaginal existence (*wujūd mithālī*) belongs to a manifest or a nonmanifest thing, and although the manifest dimensions are annihilated – where annihilation is permissible – the images remain. It is not like shadows which disappear; when

⁸⁴ See *Tanbīh*, MS Damad Ibrahim Paşa 25, fl. 49b–50a; and MS Yusuf Aga, which is copied from the original (*aşl*), 161a–b.

a person is gone a shadow is gone. God does not cause something which He created to stop existing with respect to what it is, nor with respect to His exalted command and Manifest Book, rather non-existent things are only non-existent because of lacking [God's] giving it existence, and in relationship to what is other than He, and by relationship to His putting of power into effect in that, and His will in the giving of existence to mirrors and viewers, or a servant along with everything that goes along with being a servant on the day of arising, by making manifest what is hidden of that, then He separates the vile from the good, placing this on one side, and that on the other . . . and *We have a preserved book* (kitāb ḥafīz) (Q. 50:4) [The imaginal existence] embraces everything that has been given existence, and what was taken out of existence, and its roots, and that which all of it comes back to, and that which is put into work in it, and its return, its being, its where, its place, its when, and *everything has a measure with Him*, (Q. 13:8) this all is realized by being given subsistence, and with its subsistent existence, taking its place in the next abode. God says: *it is given to them in resemblance and whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they say: this is what was given us aforesaid* (Q. 2:25). This is a reminder of the aforementioned imaginal existence. That is, God determines in the next abode that each time something is taken from it, its image (*mithāl*) takes its place, so that it is without sensory time . . . its sign [in this world] is the recurring fruit of a tree which tastes the same for most people year after year; it shall be so in heaven but without time.⁸⁵

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

The interrelationality between this world and the next can also be conveyed through the parable of the mustard seed, which Ibn Barraġān presumably drew from Matthew 13:31–32.⁸⁶ Ibn Barraġān discusses the relationship of a mustard seed to the mustard tree to illustrate the relationship between both worlds. The imagery aligns perfectly with the Qur'ānic myth of creation. For according to Muslim tradition, God first planted trees on earth, and then seeds grew out of those trees. The trees produce mustard seeds, which in turn contain the qualities of the tree.

⁸⁵ *Tanbīh*, MS Reisulkuttab, 30, fl. 161b–162a. This passage is found in the last section (*faṣl*) of Ibn Barraġān's commentary on sūra 3 (Āl 'Imrān) of the *Tanbīh*. Unfortunately, the entire passage appears to be missing from the MSS used in Mazyadī's edition (see I, pp. 597–607). Moreover, the passage is not in 'Adlūnī's edition of the *Tanbīh*, which only covers the second half of Ibn Barraġān's commentary beginning with sūra 17 (al-Isrā'). For a second discussion of *al-wujūd al-mithālī*, see the *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 133–135 (compare with MS Damad Ibrahim Paşa 25, fl. 49b–50a; MS Yusuf Aga, which is copied from the original (*aṣl*), 161a–b).

⁸⁶ The Parable of the Mustard Seed can be found in Matthew 13:31–32; Luke 13:18–19; Mark 4:30–32; and the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas 20. Ibn Barraġān probably only had access to Matthew. See Chapter 7, and *Īdāb*, ¶589.

The archetype (tree) comes before its manifestation (seed). Thus the world of manifestation is the “seed” (or fruit) of its unseen archetype (tree), and it bears its marks and traces just as the mustard seed contains all the qualities of its tree:

Take, for example, the mustard seed. It is small and fine when God plants it. You can directly observe its heat,⁸⁷ color, shape, form, taste, smell, and all or most of the qualities for which it comes to be called mustard. God configures [the seed] and nurtures it into a standing tree with [primary] roots and [secondary] roots that each have their roots, [and so on] to the furthest limit. The tree also has a trunk which brings together the things that ascend from its base, and which branches out at the top. That trunk has branches, which in turn have twigs, which again have shoots, leaves, and blossoms, and everything that ensues from it all. There is no doubt that God infuses the taste of the seed throughout the tree, including its dryness, heat, benefits, and harms, and all of its external qualities which it was created with, and the internal attributes which emerge from it. Such is the case for the *ḥaqq* (HMBK) which we seek to describe.

Similarly, knowledge that is discovered when one contemplates the [mustard] seed must be recognized by the intellect with certainty, and witnessed by faith. One must acknowledge that all parts and qualities of the tree are from [the mustard] seed, including primary roots, and secondary roots, to their furthest limit, and all parts above it, with primary branches, and secondary branches, to their furthest limit, and the blossoms. It is thus that one must know that the tree is conceived of in that seed.

It is in this manner that the next world is known from this world. And when one *returns the gaze* (Q. 67:4) a second time, one knows that this world is from the next world. Upon *returning the gaze* the second time one recognizes the things of the next world in every being of this world, for this world is drawn from the next. This is the [true] testimony. Thus the tree in this metaphor, with all that it encompasses, is the Intermediate Abode (*al-dār al-wuṣṭā*) [elsewhere Ibn Barrajān calls the tree the next world (*ākhirā*)]⁸⁸ whereas this world is the seed with all its contents and everything into which it divides. For when God first created this world, He did not begin with seeds but He created trees and plants, out which He gave existence to seeds. Similarly, this world is drawn from the next, so this world inasmuch as it is the tree which contains all living things, corresponds to the seeds. When [living creatures] die, they emerge as the tree from which the seeds come to be. Then when they are resurrected, they correspond to the seed. God says: *We have determined among you death; We shall not be outstripped; that We may transform the likes of you, and make you to grow again in a fashion you know not.* (Q. 56:60–61) . . . this is an example of the correspondence of the tree to the kernel, and the kernel to the tree.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibn Barrajān is using Galenic categories of heat and dryness to describe the qualities of mustard.

⁸⁸ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 164. ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 499–502.

IV READING THE SIGNS OF GOD

The natural world, like the Arabic language, was dignified to be the place of God's self-disclosure. God "speaks" Adam, the Qur'ān *and* the natural world into being (*kun*). He bestows existence upon the cosmic book of nature through His Word. Therefore, like the Qur'ān, the natural world *communicates* something of its Author. Ibn Barrajān spent most of his life contemplating what exactly is "communicated" by God through nature. For like the Qur'ān, the cosmic book possesses an outward form and inner meanings. The outward form, moreover, does not exhaust the inner meanings but rather embodies them.

To put it differently: the Qur'ān possesses a special ontological status. It cannot be reduced to a set of morals, reminders, rulings, or even metaphysical teachings. Similarly, God's signs (*āyāt Allāh*) in nature are more than mere salutary reminders of His names and qualities. They are more than teleological proofs for His existence, or signs of His deliberate fine-tuning of the natural world. God's signs in nature are *ontological extensions* of the hereafter.⁹⁰ Hence Ibn Barrajān's fascination with studying the outer structure of the Qur'ān (*naẓm*) on the one hand, and of nature (*āyāt*, ḤMBK) on the other.

Ibn Barrajān believed that to limit the ontological status of the natural world to a mere reminder or a teleological-semiotic proof for the divine is to reduce His signs in creation to abstract and disconnected markers with no connection to the hereafter. For Ibn Barrajān, natural signs, like Qur'ānic verses, are submerged in both worlds and are portals, or unobstructed entry points into the beyond. They represent ontological extensions of otherworldly realities that they signal. As unbroken tunnels of light, they transmit something of the luminosity of the next world. Moreover, since this world (*dunyā*), the isthmus (*barzakh*), and the next world (*ākhirā*) are inward and outward aspects of each other, the signs of this world are anticipations of the realities of the isthmus, which in turn anticipate those of the next world in an ontological hierarchical succession.

⁹⁰ It is worth nothing that Ibn Barrajān's reflections on the signs of God differ markedly from Ghazālī's treatise on natural signs entitled "The Wisdom in God's Creations" (*al-Hikma fī makhlūqāt Allāh*). For instance, while Ibn Barrajān emphasizes the ontological connection of signs (like the sun and water) to their archetypal realities, Ghazālī uses these same signs as the basis for teleological proofs for God's existence, His design of the natural world, and His care for humankind which should be reciprocated by human gratitude, glorification, and praise.

The signs of God are everywhere. They are innumerable, since “everything other than God” (*mā siwā Allāh*) points to Him. Creation is a theater of signs, reminders (*tadhkīr*), or denotations (*dalā'il*) heralding and anticipating realities in the next world. One of the axioms of Ibn Barrajān's thought, which he articulates in a myriad of ways in his works, is that “every existent thing herebelow is a sign (*āya*) of a reality in the hereafter,” since all created existents are “yanked out” (*muntaza'*) from the hereafter.⁹¹ Thus, every reality of this world has an archetype in the next, and is in fact and extension of it, since “the above correlates with the below” (*al-a'lā yantazim bi-l-asfal*). For instance, day and night are governed by the rotations of the celestial bodies and are ontologically rooted in the “Inner Day” (*al-nahār al-bāṭin*).⁹²

The whole world is like a house filled with lamps, rays, and lights through whom the things of the house are elucidated. As for the quest for the source and makers of the lights, guideways, marks, and denotations . . . one must imagine the oil which gives light to the lamps, and which is the source of [light]. [Also imagine] the blessed olive tree, which [stands as] an example for ḤMBK.⁹³

“Religious literacy,” for Ibn Barrajān, is the ability to read God's signs in creation. One of the keys to deciphering these signs is to study revelation closely, since the Qur'ān explains the cosmos, and the cosmos explains the Qur'ān. Studying the cosmos deepens one's understanding of the Qur'ān, just as studying the Qur'ān and its organizational structure, and reciting its verses complements the study astronomy, botany, or medicine with a contemplative eye. For God's signs in the world parallel those in revelation:

Know with certainty that God did not report anything [in revelation] which is not denoted in the world by a sign or by signs which give knowledge of [the hereafter] just like the [revealed] report. Nor is there a sign in the world that denotes knowledge of God, or of a name among His names, or an attribute among His attributes, or of the next world and all its existence, or of angels, prophets, prophecy, messengerhood, or of messengers and what they brought, except that prophecy has given report of it, and alerted us to it in differentiated or nondifferentiated mode. This is in order for the demonstration to confirm itself, and for certainty to disclose itself. God says: *We have neglected nothing in the book* (Q. 6:38).⁹⁴

Like Qur'ānic āyas, cosmic signs generally reflect not just one, but multiple realities of the hereafter simultaneously. Just as crystals reflect

⁹¹ *Īdāh*, ¶559. ⁹² *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 315.

⁹³ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 121–122. ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 334.

the full spectrum of light and colors when observed from different angles, the signs of God exhibit the hereafter in a myriad of ways depending on the standpoint from which they are beheld. The multiple meanings of God's signs emerge out of the fact that God's creative power is infinite, and thus His creation can be contemplated from different perspectives, and by different souls with different potentials and degrees of realization. Just as the sun, moon, and stars never arise at the exact same place twice, there is no repetition or monotony in the divine self-disclosure. In Ibn Barraĵān's words, God's "self-disclosure is forever renewing" (*tajallī mutajaddid abadan*).⁹⁵

Ibn Barraĵān encourages his readers to constantly turn their gaze to the heavens and the earth. God's creative power is infinite, as is His revealed word. The signs of God, like the verses of the Qur'ān, are open to simultaneous interpretations that are equally valid. The sea, for instance, can symbolize both positive and negative elements of the hereafter depending on the standpoint of the beholder. This "loose" hermeneutics accommodates the imaginative faculty of the seeker and gives way to a variety of perspectives and a rich understanding of created existence.⁹⁶ For instance, beholding water with the eye of *i'tibār* alerts the contemplative to many realities. Just as water revives barren lands, it symbolizes the descent of the command from the divine throne to the cosmos and God's governance over all things through His command. From another standpoint, water is a sign of His deployment of revelation through His messengers, the sending forth of prophets, and the revival and resurrection of the dead, and thus of the coming of the Hour.⁹⁷

Believers behold the signs of God in accordance to their own capacities, and in a hierarchical apprehension "ranked in degrees of excellence" (*tafāḍul*). Just as a poet, an architect, and a geologist would observe a mountain through different analytical lenses, so the mystic and the common believer apprehend different levels of meaning in God's signs. Thus, for some, these signs are open passageways onto the unseen, while others "do not even see the sign whatsoever."⁹⁸ In this sense, the reality of a sign is in the eye of the beholder. And just as God's signs in this world are apprehended in different ways, each believer will experience God's disclosure in the hereafter in accordance with his or her own degree of realization. The denizens of paradise, likewise,

⁹⁵ Ibid., V, p. 414. ⁹⁶ Ibid., V, p. 245. ⁹⁷ Ibid., I, p. 341.

⁹⁸ Ibid., V, pp. 213–214. See also Ibid., III, pp. 61–64.

contemplate the Face of God in accordance to their respective ranks of knowledge and proximity to Him.

Ibn Barrajān sometimes distinguishes between ordinary analogical examples (*mathal*), which have no unique ontological status, and divine signs (*āya*) proper. He employs the term *mathal* in the context of analogies expressed in the Qur'ān, whereas the word *āya* connotes an analogous and ontological relationality between symbol and archetype and is usually employed in the context of signs in nature.⁹⁹ When beholding a positive sign, Ibn Barrajān occasionally invokes the Qur'ānic term “graces” (*ālā'*), since the *ālā'* are gifts that manifest positive realities of the hereafter.¹⁰⁰ These graces most often premonition the beatific vision. For instance, facing God in canonical prayer, knowledge of God, supplications, and remembrance of God all anticipate the encounter, direct discourse with, and vision of God.¹⁰¹ The rising of sun and moon are signs of the at divine encounter. Darkness of the night, losing one's bearings, sadness, the loneliness experienced by an outsider in a foreign land, are signs of perdition. In contrast, outspreading, joy, recovery from sickness, illumination of the skies, are *ālā'* of the joy experienced at the moment of deliverance and the divine encounter.¹⁰²

The Exclusive Signs of God (*āyāt khāṣṣa*): Sun and Moon

The greatest of all signs is of course the Universal Servant (*al-āya al-'uẓmā*) who embraces “everything other than God” (*mā siwā Allāh*) in an all-comprehensive, meta-cosmic totality. Below the all-encompassing Universal Servant lie the “exclusive signs” (*āyāt khāṣṣa*) of God, namely sun and moon. The sun occupies a central position among the planets and, like the moon, is a supreme sign of God because it exclusively represents the Light of Lights (*nūr al-anwār*).¹⁰³ It embodies God's self-disclosure (*al-tajallī al-'alī*) on Judgment Day. In contrast to most signs in nature which symbolize different aspects of divinity and the hereafter,

⁹⁹ In his discussion of *And it is He who let forth the two seas, this one Sweet, grateful to taste, and this salt, bitter to the tongue, and He set between them a barrier* (Q 25:53) he points out that the sweet and salty waters of the sea referred to in Q 25:53 are *amthāl*, or analogies for faith and guidance on the one hand, and unbelief and perdition on the other. (Ibid., IV, pp. 190–191; for a discussion of night and day as *amthāl*, see also IV, p. 189.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., V, p. 85. ¹⁰¹ Ibid., I, pp. 111–112. ¹⁰² Ibid., IV, pp. 306–307.

¹⁰³ Ibid., I, p. 297.

the “exclusive signs” have only one *‘ibra*: they designate the fullness of God in a concentrated fashion and are hence more sublime.¹⁰⁴

There is an interesting correspondence to note between God’s exclusive *āyas* in the natural world (sun and moon), His compact *āyas* (*muḥkamāt*) in the Qur’ān (e.g. sūrat al-Fātiḥa, or the verse of the throne), and His exclusive embrace by the human heart. Just as sun and moon denote God’s fullness, the core of the Qur’ānic revelation embraces the fullness of the God’s message, and the human heart according to a holy saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) embraces God. Moreover, the secondary signs of God in creation parse out the meanings of the exclusive signs and denote various qualities of God, the afterlife, paradise, hell, and otherworldly states. These secondary signs in nature correspond to the consimilar verses (*āyāt mutashābihāt*) of the Qur’ān, and parse out the compact verses.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the secondary signs correspond to the organs of the human body which are secondary in relation to the heart.

Water: The Active Principle of Existence

Beneath the exclusive signs are the secondary signs throughout cosmic existence. Ibn Barraḡān’s favorite sign of God is perhaps the Qur’ānic “water” (*mā’*) which is one in essence, yet gives rise to multiplicity. When Ibn Barraḡān discusses the symbolism of water, he means the water that is cosmologically situated beneath the divine throne (*His throne is upon water*, Q. 11:7) not ordinary H₂O. This Qur’ānic *mā’* encompasses the realities of both ordinary water (H₂O) and the seminal fluid of living creatures. Using Ibn Barraḡān’s language, one could say that ordinary water and seminal fluids are “yanked out” ontologically from the Qur’ānic *mā’*.

Qur’ānic *mā’* descends into the world from the divine throne. It is a vital principle that gives life to physical organisms in the vegetal and animal kingdoms, just as it waters the gardens of paradise. The ability of rainwater to revive barren earth is a sign of its descent from the divine command. *Mā’* is thus also sign of prophecy and revelation which “revive the dead.” For a drop of rainwater makes its way into a shelled mollusk in the ocean and transforms into a living pearl.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Although the concept and technical usage of the term *āya khāṣṣa* can be detected in the *Tanbīh* (IV, pp. 186, 362; V, pp. 51, 252, 262–263) these exclusive signs are discussed more prominently in his final work, the *Idāh* (see index under *āya khāṣṣa*).

¹⁰⁵ See discussion of *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*, Chapter 6. ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, V, p. 246.

Just as rainwater descends from heaven and gives life to the vegetal kingdom, semen is an active *mā'* that descends “from its place of origin to its place of rest,” and out of that seminal exchange the animal kingdom emerges in all its diversity. Adam was made of the original *mā'* (“semen”), *water* (active principle) and clay (passive recipient), as affirmed by the Qur'ān (Q 25:54).¹⁰⁷ In Ibn Barraġān's words:

This world is a piece of the hereafter, formed in accordance with the latter's form (*al-dunyā nubdha min al-ākħira šuwwirat 'alā šūratihā*), in both felicity and torment, except that [the form of this world] is a fusion and diminution [in relation to the hereafter]. We have also spoken of the fact that the waters [of heaven] which descend *from gardens and fountains and a noble station* (Q. 26: 57–58) descend upon [earthly vegetations] which are similar to [the heavenly gardens], and vice versa [heavenly gardens are similar to earthly ones]. The Prophet said: ‘the Garden is closer to one of you than the straps on his own sandals, and so is the Fire.’¹⁰⁸

Secondary Signs of God

While the natural signs of sun, moon, and water occupy the bulk of Ibn Barraġān's discussions of God's signs (*āyat*), several other signs are discussed in Ibn Barraġān's writings. For instance, the number one, from which all numbers issue, symbolizes God as the First, Last, Outward, and Inward.¹⁰⁹ Divine unity is also signaled by the sending forth of winds (*irsāl al-riyāh*), since wind hails from a single source and engulfs the world of multiplicity.¹¹⁰ Further, the emergence of creation from nonexistence into existence is signaled by a person's transition from sleep to wakefulness, and by the transition of night to day.¹¹¹ The isthmus (*barzakh*) is signaled by the crack-of-dawn (*fajr*).¹¹² In similar fashion, sleep, wakefulness, and dreams are signs of death, resurrection, and beholding the hereafter. The responsiveness and subjugation of the human sensory faculties and of the limbs to the human being symbolize the angelic world, since the angels are perfectly subservient to God.¹¹³ The beatific vision (*al-ru'ya al-karīma*) is symbolized by faith in this world, just as good deeds foreshadow pleasures of the hereafter.¹¹⁴

It should be noted that while Ibn Barraġān preferred to dwell on the positive signs of the hereafter, he also discussed negative signs that evoke

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., V, p. 241. *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 36–38.

¹⁰⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 303. ¹⁰⁹ *Īdāb*, ¶48.

¹¹⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 347. ¹¹¹ Ibid., I, p. 131. ¹¹² Ibid., IV, p. 368.

¹¹³ Ibid., II, p. 243. ¹¹⁴ Ibid., I, p. 167.

phenomena of Hell. For instance, hardened hearts in this world are reminders of the torture-angels of Hell.¹¹⁵ Moreover, just as rainclouds are signs of heaven, thunderbolts and lightning are signs of Hell.¹¹⁶ Signs of God also manifest in religious history, as evidenced by reports of God's punishing of his enemies and saving of His friends.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *Īdāh*, ¶116. ¹¹⁶ *Tanbīh*, IV, p. 333. ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, p. 190.

The Hermeneutics of Certainty

Harmony, Hierarchy, and Hegemony of the Qur'ān

INTRODUCTION

One of Ibn Barraĵān's overarching concerns in his tafsīrs is to demonstrate the inherent correspondences between revelation and the natural signs of God, and to show how a total immersion in these two modes of divine self-disclosure can generate a concrete awareness and certainty of God's presence in this life. Ibn Barraĵān advocated a hermeneutic of total immersion into the universe of the Qur'ān and natural signs and held that discovering the inner meanings of one went hand in hand with an apprehension of the other. As indicated in the full title of the *Tanbīh*, Ibn Barraĵān considers the Qur'ānic revelation and the world of divine signs as complementary and ultimately identical facets of a single reality which flow from God and return to Him.¹ This mode of reflection necessitates an existential transformation in which human character traits are effaced in the divine, thus exposing the spiritual aspirant to the graces of awareness (*shu'ūr*) and inspiration (*ilhām*).²

At the highest level, Ibn Barraĵān holds that the Qur'ān discloses itself to the reader as a direct and personal revelation, just as creation discloses itself to the Mu'tabir as a revelatory book. He occasionally calls this

¹ The full title of the *Tanbīh* is telling: *Tanbīh al-afhām ilā tadabbur al-kitāb al-ḥakīm wa-ta'arruf al-āyāt wa-l-naba' al-'azīm*, literally "Alerting Intellects to Meditation on the Wise Book and Recognition of the Signs and the Tremendous Tiding [of Judgment Day]," or simply "Meditations on the Qur'ān, Natural Symbols, and Eschatology." *Al-Naba' al-'azīm*, the "tremendous tiding [of Judgment Day]" is taken from Q. 78:2.

² Gril, "La 'Lecture Supérieur"; Gonzalez, "Un ejemplo de la hermeneutica sufi."

personalized reading “the supreme reading” (*al-tilāwa al-‘ulyā*), a term that accurately describes the thrust of his approach.³ Ibn Barrajān holds that two types of reciters of the Qur’ān are heirs (*wārith*) to the prophets. The first is in a state of such immersion and the realization of witnessing (*taḥqīq al-shuhūd*) of God’s presence during his Qur’ānic recitation that it is as if he were reciting directly to his Lord. The second reader is still higher than the first. His heart is purified and awake (*tayaqquḥ*), his mystical knowledge existentially realized and informed by inspiration (*ilhām*) and spiritual openings (*futūḥāt*), and his soul rejoices (*taladhdhudh*) in God, and in the lights of certitude and the intimacy of witnessing God (*uns al-mushādada*), such that it is as though God were reciting the Qur’ān to him. Whereas the first senses that he is reciting the Book to God, for the second God is reciting through him, and he hears the divine response to his recitation. His experience of the Qur’ān is like a direct and personal revelation. The first is akin to a scholar who reads to his student, while the second is like a student who reads back to the scholar.⁴

Typologically speaking, Ibn Barrajān’s exegetical writings stand in contrast to the classical “Sufi” commentaries on the Qur’ān. His hermeneutic differs from that of the early Sufi exegetes who typically penetrated the Holy Book in search of allusions (*ishāra*) and correspondences to their own spiritual states. Iconic figures like Sulamī (d. 412/1021), for instance, collected interpretive sayings of earlier masters to illustrate their personal interactions with the divine Word.⁵ Others, like Tustarī and Qushayrī (d. 464/1072), scrutinized Qur’ānic verses for their hidden *ta’wīl*, or inner metaphorical interpretation. Ibn Barrajān largely dispenses with these precedents, approaching the Qur’ān in a unique way. He rarely draws upon Sufi commentaries and spends relatively little time on their favorite passages. Thus, for example, the Sufi interpretation of the story of Joseph (sūra 12) and the story of Moses and Khidr (Q. 18:60–82) receive comparatively little attention. Moreover, in contrast to classical Sufi commentaries centered on the ideas of unveiling (*kashf*) and allusion (*ishāra*), Ibn Barrajān emphasizes contemplative crossing (*ibra*) into the unseen world. His work could therefore be best categorized as an “*i’tibārī*” exegesis that represents a culminating achievement of the Mu’tabirūn tradition in al-Andalus.

³ This term does not occur frequently in Ibn Barrajān’s writings, but is mentioned in passing in his introduction (*Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 59)

⁴ This discussion occurs in *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 155–157; and *Īdāh*, ¶29–30.

⁵ See Sands, *Sūfi Commentaries*, pp. 35–44; 68–71.

The most striking features of Ibn Barraġān's Qur'ānic thought are its bold originality, internal coherence, predictable consistency, and a faithfulness to his cosmological and hermeneutical precepts, which in turn are bound by a hyperliteral and ontologically determined adherence to the surface meaning of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. In advocating an *i'tibārī* exegesis, Ibn Barraġān develops a highly sophisticated cosmological vision of the Qur'ān characterized by a back-to-the-sources outlook that builds upon Sunnī exegetical precedent yet breaks with its established terminological and doctrinal conventions. Ibn Barraġān's writings are thus in profound dialogue and disagreement with the Sunnī exegetical tradition. In following through with his cosmology, Ibn Barraġān calls for a rethinking of established Sunnī doctrines about the Qur'ān and a fresh return to the Word of God and His Messenger.

Ibn Barraġān's Qur'ānic hermeneutics of certainty are presented in three sections below. Section I centers on the idea of Qur'ānic harmony and coherence (*naẓm*), that is, the Qur'ān as a structurally perfect, coherent, and unambiguous composition (*naẓm*). Each of its verses, like each atom in creation, is exactly where it is meant to be. For Qur'ānic verses and created atoms are differentiations of the Universal Servant. The various motivations behind and consequences of Ibn Barraġān's notion of coherence and orderliness of the Qur'ān will be examined in detail. The doctrine of *naẓm al-qur'ān*, which is central to Ibn Barraġān's hermeneutics, serves as the basis for his refutation of the notion of Qur'ānic ambiguity (*ishtibāh*), bolstering his treatment of the sūras as cohesive blocks, as well as his refutation of the doctrine of abrogation (*nāsikh wa-mansūkh*).

Section II examines Ibn Barraġān's understanding of the process of revelation as a downward hierarchical unfolding from sheer unity to differentiated human speech. The complexity (not ambiguity) of the Qur'ān lies precisely in its multilayered nature: certain passages are more elevated, universal, and all-encompassing by virtue of their proximity to the Preserved Tablet, while others are lower in rank, narrower in scope, and differentiated in subject matter. Ibn Barraġān refers to the sum total of synoptic verses as "The Supreme Qur'ān," (*al-qur'ān al-'azīm*). This is the core of revelation and it contrasts with the differentiated verses which he calls "The Exalted Qur'ān" (*al-qur'ān al-'azīz*). He insists, moreover, that the synoptic verses are not only thematically all-comprehensive but ontologically superior to the ordinary verses of the Qur'ān.

The conception of the Qur'ān as a multilayered text informs Ibn Barrajān's inversed interpretation of its *muhkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses (Q. 3:7), which are typically interpreted by exegetes to mean "clear" passages versus "ambiguous" ones. For Ibn Barrajān, the *muhkamāt* summarize the meanings of scripture since they are "fixed/compact" reverberations of the Preserved Tablet. The *mutashābihāt*, for their part, "unpack," parse out, or differentiate the meanings of scripture, and are its "consimilar" or "mutually resembling" verses. Thus the three terms '*azīz*, *mufaṣṣal*, and *mutashābih* denote the differentiation of revelation in Ibn Barrajān's writings, while '*azīm*, *mujmal*, and *muhkam* denote compactness and nondifferentiation. Furthermore, the Qur'ān's multilayered nature and varying degrees of compactness guide Ibn Barrajān's understanding of the "disconnected letters" (*hurūf muqatta'a*) as synoptic (*mujmal*) containers of meaning, and of "*ta'wīl*" (typically translated as "metaphorical" or "esoteric" interpretation) as a process of tracing each verse to its point of origin (*awwal*) in the Preserved Tablet, or to its final destination (*ma'āl*) in the hereafter.

Section III analyzes the epistemological hegemony of the Qur'ān in Ibn Barrajān's thought. The Qur'ān, he proclaims, serves a "litmus test" that measures the veracity of all other bodies of knowledge that fall under its purview, including weak aḥādīth, esoteric works, and Biblical material. This hermeneutical "Principle of Qur'ānic Hegemony" is a tenet to which he adheres in all of his works. Ibn Barrajān's use of the Qur'ān to explain the Qur'ān, and his employment of Ḥadīth literature will be examined in this section as well. This discussion of hegemony prepares the ground for Chapter 7 on his use of Biblical materials as proof-texts for Qur'ānic teachings.

I HARMONY: THE QUR'ĀN AS A PERFECT AND UNEQUIVOCAL TEXT

Harmoniousness and Coherence of the Qur'ān (*naẓm*)

Ibn Barrajān squarely proclaims the Qur'ān to be a harmonious and internally coherent text devoid of ambiguity. The sincerely faithful and diligent mystic-scholar who masters the prerequisite exoteric and esoteric religious sciences can discover its meanings. Moreover, just as contemplating ḤMBK and the harmony of the universe is a key to crossing into the unseen (see Chapter 5), one of the keys to unlocking the mysteries of the Qur'ān is to understand its perfectly harmonic and organizational

arrangement (*naẓm*). For like a divinely strung pearl necklace (lit. *naẓm*), much of the Qur'ān's beauty lies in its web of intricate arrangements, thematic interconnections, and overlapping verses, which form a coherent and unified compositional whole.

Ibn Barraĵān was possibly the first Muslim exegete to dedicate a vast portion of his commentary to explain and develop the theory of Qur'ānic *naẓm*. He does not cite outside sources, though there is evidence he drew from works in the field of semantics and Mu'tazilī theology.⁶ But unlike the earlier and later writings of this genre, Ibn Barraĵān does not evoke the theory of *naẓm* in connection with or as a defense of the dogma of *i'jāz al-qur'ān*, namely the Qur'ān's inimitable nature and hence divine provenance. Figures such as the eleventh/fifteenth-century Mamlūk exegete Biqā'ī authored massive works like “The Orderly Pearls: On the Correspondence of the Verses and Chapters” (*Naẓm al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa-l-suwar*) primarily as a defense of Qur'ānic inimitability. Biqā'ī's tafsīr, which borrows from Ibn Barraĵān's, provided the basis for works by twentieth-century Muslim intellectuals like the Indian Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (d. 1997).⁷ The latter marshaled *naẓm* in part as a response to Orientalist and Christian criticisms of incoherence.

Ibn Barraĵān had a different agenda. He developed his theory of *naẓm* in light of his cosmology and in opposition to the almost universally held assumption that certain passages of the Qur'ān are “ambiguous” (*ishtibāh*). Most Sunnī exegetes of the medieval period posited a distinction between “clear” and “ambiguous” verses on the basis of Q. 3:7, which states

⁶ Ibn Barraĵān's theory of *naẓm* may have been inspired by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī's (d. 403/1013) extensive treatment of this subject in *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*. This work in turn has its roots in 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurĵānī's (d. 471/1078 or 474/1081) careful semantic analysis of this concept in *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, *Asrār al-balāgha*, and *al-Risāla al-shāfiya fī i'jāz al-qur'ān*, which he developed on the basis of efforts by Khaṭṭābī (d. 386/996 or 388/998), the third/ninth-century Mu'tazilī works of Wāsiṭī (d. ca. 306/918), as well as Jāhiz (d. 254/869). Regrettably, Wāsiṭī's *K. I'jāz al-qur'ān fī naẓmihī wa-ta'līfih*, and Jāhiz's *K. fī al-ihtijāj li-naẓm al-qur'ān wa-salāmatih min al-ziyāda wa-l-nuqṣān* (the latter which is known as *Naẓm al-qur'ān*) are lost. Other early Mu'tazilī proponents of *naẓm* include al-Bāhilī (d. 300/913), al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915) of the school of Baṣra (see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, sec. 41, pp. 219–20). Later Mu'tazila, like Abū Bakr b. al-Akshid (d. 326/938) and Abū 'Alī Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Naṣr (d. 312/924), wrote works elaborating on Jāhiz's thesis as well. Other works that may have informed Ibn Barraĵān's theory of *naẓm* may include the exegete al-Khaṭīb al-Iskāfī's (d. 421/1030) *Durrat al-tanzīl* (See *EI*², “Naẓm,” *EI*² (Heinrichs)) and Burhān al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Ḥamza al-Kirmānī's (d. 505/1111) *Asrār al-tikrār fī 'ulūm al-qur'ān* (= *al-Burhān fī tawjīh mutashābih al-qur'ān*). Outside the realm of theology, men of letters also wrote on *naẓm*. These include Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī's (d. ca. 400/1010) *al-Ṣinā' atayn*.

⁷ Abdul-Ra'of, “Life and Works.”

that God revealed *the Book wherein are verses that are muḥkamāt . . . and others mutashābihāt*. Ibn Barraḡān was adamantly opposed to interpreting this to mean that the Qur'ān contains “clear” (*muḥkamāt*) passages and “ambiguous” (*mutashābihāt*) ones. He read these terms as respectively meaning “compact” and “mutually resembling.” In his view, the mainstream interpretive tradition limits the fullness of the Qur'ān on the one hand, and stifles, mutes, and precludes the possibility of authentic mystical exegesis on the other. He contends that by casting veils of ambiguity over the Qur'ān, Sunnī exegetes open the backdoors for radical esoterist (*bāṭinī*) interpretations (*ta'wīl*). Instead of forestalling heresies, the doctrine of Qur'ānic ambiguity serves as a basis for esoterist Ismā'īlī and radical Sufi readings of the Qur'ān and delegitimizes authentic mystical interpretation, interpretations promoted by the likes of Ibn Barraḡān himself. By proving the harmonic thematic arrangement of the resembling *mutashābihāt*, therefore, Ibn Barraḡān sought to “disambiguate” the Qur'ān while also securing his interpretive license over the Holy Text as a legitimate mystic-scholar. That is, the Mu'tabirūn are the true repositories of inner knowledge, and their approach necessarily differs from esoterist exegetical misinterpreters. In his words,

[Defining the *mutashābihāt* as “ambiguous” renders them] a source of dissension (*fitna*), a playground for whims and lies, and an invitation to metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) . . . As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the *mutashābihāt*, desiring dissension, and desiring its metaphorical interpretation (Q. 3:7) . . . Moreover, it is as a result of the near-total neglect of *naẓm* that [Qur'ān commentators] have failed to understand and discern “obfuscated” (*mushtabih*) from “consimilar” (*mutashābih*) verses. [Deeming certain passages unfathomable,] they wrongly caused their followers to flee from looking into the Qur'ān and contemplating the Book of God (*tashrīd al-atbā' 'an al-naẓar fī al-qur'ān wa-l-tadabbur li-kitāb Allāh*) as He commanded us to do.⁸

Ibn Barraḡān's concept of the *mutashābihāt* will be further analyzed below. What is important to keep in mind at the present juncture is that *naẓm* is not an apologetic attempt to defend Qur'ānic coherence, but a rejection of Qur'ānic ambiguity and a means of restoring legitimate interpretation of the Holy Text into the hands of the mystics.

Naẓm presumes that the sūras of the Qur'ān represent independent and cohesive blocs. They are arranged alongside each other by their Author with purpose. Like the doctrine of the Real Upon Which Creation is

⁸ *Idāh*, ¶196, 200.

Created – discussed in Chapter 5 – which presupposes a purposeful harmony throughout creation, Ibn Barrajān insists that the verses that make up the sūras are divinely arranged (*naẓm*) for a specific design.

Bearing his idea of inter-textual cohesion in mind, three basic patterns of *naẓm* can be detected in Ibn Barrajān’s works. These are (1) thematic harmony (*intiẓām al-ma’nā*) between individual āyas, entire sūras, or āyas of general and specific import; (2) explicative harmony where one passage elucidates another by virtue of its placement in relation to other passages; and (3) symmetrical harmony where the placement of identical āyas have a bearing on the meaning of the others.

Thematic harmony

The most frequent pattern of *naẓm* in Ibn Barrajān’s works is that of the “thematic harmony” of two verses. His transitions from one verse to another are almost always preceded by the statement: “God links (*waṣala*) the previous verse with the following.” Here the term *waṣl* is synonymous with *naẓm al-ma’nā*, or thematic coherence since it signals a thematic continuity between a passage and its preceding one.⁹ For instance, descriptions of the unbelievers in Q. 2:6–7¹⁰ represent a “continuation (*waṣl*) by way of contrast” to the godfearing (*muttaqīn*) in Q. 2:2–4.¹¹ Or again, there is an evident thematic *waṣl* between Q 20:53 and Q. 20:55 in the dialogue between Moses and the Pharaoh:

[Pharaoh] said, “So who is the Lord of your two, Moses?” (49) He said, “Our Lord is He who gives everything its creation, then guides [it].” (50) Pharaoh said, “And what of the former generations?” (51) Said Moses, “The knowledge of them is with my Lord, in a Book; my Lord goes not astray, nor forgets – (52) He who appointed the earth to be a cradle for you, and therein threaded roads for you, and sent down water out of heaven, and therewith We have brought forth divers kinds of plants. (53) Do you eat, and pasture your cattle! Surely in that are signs for men possessing reason. (54) Out of the earth We created you, and We shall cause you to return to it, and bring you forth from it a second time.” (Q. 20:49–55)¹²

To restate the point just made, *naẓm* can refer to the fact that two passages *within* a sūra intersect thematically. Such verses are usually

⁹ Sometimes, the link (*waṣl*) denotes that two Qur’ānic verses simply follow one another sequentially without there being any thematic connection between the two. *Idāh*, ¶158.

¹⁰ As for the unbelievers, alike it is to them whether thou hast warned them or hast not warned them, they do not believe.[6] God has sealed their hearts and their hearing. Upon their eyes is a covering, and theirs is a mighty chastisement (Q. 2:6–7).

¹¹ Ibid., ¶60–62. ¹² Ibid., ¶57–58.

placed at the beginning and end of a sūra, as with Q. 10:2 and Q. 10:108.¹³ However, Ibn Barrajān likes to point out that the opening and closing verses of one sūra can accord with the opening and closing verses of an adjoining sūra. Thus, an accordance is possible not only between individual verses but between entire sūras. For instance, sūras 16 (al-Naḥl) and 17 (al-Isrā') accord with one another since they both begin by glorifying God and declaring His incomparability (*tasbīḥ*). Moreover, the accordance between 16 and 17 is extended over to sūras 14 (Ibrāhīm) and 15 (al-Ḥijr) and to all “sūras of divine threat” (*dhawāt al-wa'r*).¹⁴

Another example of inter-sūra accordance is as follows:

The verse *O believers, fulfill your bonds* (Q. 5:1) accords in meaning with (*muntazim al-ma'nā bi-qawlibi*) the first and last verses of sūrat al-Nisā' (4), namely *O mankind, fear your Lord . . . by whom you demand one of another, and these bonds of kinship* (Q. 4:1) and *O mankind, a proof has now come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a manifest light* (Q. 4:174). In Q. 4:1 God reminds believers of their *bonds of kinship* (*arḥām*) and commands that these bonds be upheld by bonds of reverential fear (*taqwā*): *and fear God by whom you demand one of another, and these bonds of kinship* (Q. 4:1) lest you break them – and verse Q.4:1 is connected (*waṣāla*) by way of thematic arrangement (*naẓm bi-l-ma'nā*) with Q. 5:1, *O believers, fulfill your bonds*.

Certain āyas are synoptic and therefore stand at the nexus of a larger cluster of āyas within their sūra. For instance, the all-inclusive command *So remember Me, and I will remember you* (Q. 2:152) accords with any Qur'ānic āya in sūra 2 (al-Baqara) that alludes to divine *remembrance* (*dhikr*). Thus the statement *God obliged the fast* (Q. 2:183) accords with Q. 2:152 since fasting (*ṣiyām*) is a form of bodily remembrance (*dhikr*).¹⁵ Likewise,

Verse 2:152, *So remember Me, and I will remember you*, accords with (*muntazim bi*) 2:127–28 where God's blessings upon us [the Muslim community] were mentioned when He caused us to be uttered on the tongues of Abraham and Ishmael prior to our existence on the day that they erected the Sacred House [in Mecca] when they supplicated, *'Our Lord, receive this from us; Thou art the*

¹³ Ibid., ¶495, *Was it a wonder to the people that We revealed to a man from among them: "Warn the people, and give thou good tidings to the believers that they have a sure footing with their Lord?" The unbelievers say, "This is a manifest sorcerer." (Q 10:2) And Say: "O men, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whosoever is guided is guided only to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss. I am not a guardian over you" (Q 10:108).*

¹⁴ Ibid., ¶570.

¹⁵ *O believers, prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you (Q. 2:183).*

*All-hearing, the All-knowing; and, our Lord, make us submissive to Thee, and of our seed a nation submissive to Thee; and show us our rites, and turn towards us; surely Thou turnest, and art All-compassionate.*¹⁶

Another synoptic verse is Q. 4:170. It accords with (*muntaẓim bi-*) several others in sūra 4 (al-Nisā'), and has analogues (*naẓīr*) elsewhere as well. These analogous Qur'ānic passages overlap thematically but have no detectable sequential correspondence. Ibn Barrajān's only purpose in pointing them out is to underscore the beautiful consimilarity (*mush-ābaha*) of the Qur'ān:

Verse Q. 4:170, *O mankind, the Messenger has now come to you with the truth from your Lord; so believe; it is better for you. And if you disbelieve, to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and God is All-knowing, All-wise*; accords with Q. 4:1 in the opening of the sūra, *O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women; and fear God through Whom you demand your rights of one another, and family ties; surely God is watching over you.* Verse Q. 4:170 also accords with connecting passages which discuss the excellence of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and messengerhood (*risāla*), its commands and prohibitions, and friendship with God (*walāya fī 'Llāh*) ... Its analogue (*naẓīr*) with which it accords (*al-muntaẓam bihā*) is in the story of Abraham and his honored guests (*mukramīn*) from the opening of sūra 51 (al-Dhāriyāt) to the end of verse 30, as well as the story of Zakariyā in sūra 19 (Maryam) up to verse 9, and the discourse of Maryam in verses Q. 19:20–21. The latter two passages (Q. 19:1–9, 20–21) have analogous passages (*naẓīr*) in sūra 3 (Āl 'Imrān).¹⁷

Certain āyas are so universal that they summarize the entire Qur'ānic message. Such verses accord with any given passage of the Qur'ān. Moreover, they resemble one another in content and are among the *mutashābihāt*. Passages like *Blessed be He who has sent down the Criterion upon His servant, that he may be a warner to all beings; to whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and He has not taken a child, and He has no associate in sovereignty; and He created the All-Thing, then He ordained it very exactly* (Q. 25:1–2) overlap with universal verses like those of sūra 112 (al-Ikhlās), and vice versa.¹⁸ As a consequence of *naẓm*, his commentary on verses from one sūra are

¹⁶ *Īdāb*, ¶114.

¹⁷ See *Īdāb*, ¶275. Elsewhere, Ibn Barrajān remarks that 6:5 and 26:189 are “corresponding verses”: *They denied the truth when it came to them, but there shall come to them news of that they were mocking* (Q. 6:5). And, *But they denied him; then there seized them the chastisement of the Day of Shadow; assuredly it was the chastisement of a dreadful day* (26:189); cf. *Īdāb*, ¶325.

¹⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶1150.

sometimes to be found in the fold of another. This may explain, for instance, why interpretations of Q. 1:5 are to be found within his remarks on Q. 2:6.¹⁹

Themes of the Sūras

Ibn Barrajān reasons that if one believes the Qur'ān to be God's literal, word-for-word revelation, then not a single letter, word, verse, or chapter of the Qur'ān can be accidental in its placement or pronunciation. Just as he insists that the Qur'ānic verses are thematically arranged, he also believes that each of the sūras stand as independent compositional units that revolve around an axial theme. The sūras are deliberately placed next to one another for a divine purpose. His pioneering "unity-of-the-sūra" approach to the Qur'ān, which heralds Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) and Biqā'ī's (d. 885/1480) works, is especially notable in the shorter sūras, particularly sūras 50 (Qāf) onward, which are more thematically cohesive than the longer sūras.

Sometimes Ibn Barrajān points out a theme that is succinct and compelling. For instance, sūra 41 (Fuṣṣilat) opens with the statement *Hā Mīm, a sending down from the Merciful (al-Raḥmān), the Compassionate (al-Raḥīm)* (Q. 41:1–2). This, he argues, indicates that the entire sūra centers on God's mercifulness and compassion.²⁰ Other times, the sūra theme he reveals consists of a list of topics covered in the chapter:

The underpinning message (*ta'sīs al-khiṭāb*) of sūra 50 (Qāf) is God's power to give life and death; the return after origination (*'awd ba'd al-bad'*); indications of the proofs and signs [of these aforementioned truths]; practicing self-observance (*murāqaba*); protection; recalling the two destinies [of the grave and hereafter] and all that they entail by way of promised [rewards] for faith, and threatened [punishments] for unbelief and rejection [of the hereafter].²¹

The signifiers (*dalā'il*) of sūra 51 (al-Dhāriyāt) are: (1) that the recompense is sure to happen; (2) that the promise and threat are true with all that they entail ...²²

The purpose of sūra 75 (al-Qiyāma) is to affirm the return to the origin, to affirm man's acquisition (*kasb*) [of deeds], and to correct the ascriptions of actions to him, to obtain knowledge of God's measuring out [of all things], to

¹⁹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 110, 117–118.

²⁰ For a complete discussion, see *Ibid.*, V, p. 34. ²¹ *Ibid.*, V, p. 176.

²² *Ibid.*, V, p. 187.

[affirm] that there is no change nor power except by God, and that nothing is but by His Will.²³

Explicative harmony

The second category of *naẓm* occurs when one verse explains the meaning of a different verse within the same *sūra* (*intizām kadhā bi-kadhā*) by virtue of their intra-*sūra* accordance. Oftentimes, the connection between the two is not obvious at first glance. In such instances, Ibn Barrajān admits that the correlation between two verses may be farfetched and uses the qualifying adverb “perhaps” (*rubbamā*) prior to his discussion.²⁴ The following example, which concerns juridical rulings of conjugal marital relations, is illustrative of Ibn Barrajān’s theory of explicative accordance:

Verse: *It is not piety to enter houses from their backdoors . . . So enter houses from their [front] doors* (Q. 2:189). Despite differences in discourse (*tabā’ud al-khiṭāb*), this verse is arranged (*naẓama*) with Q. 2:222 that states: *They will question thee concerning menstruation. Say: “It is hurt; so go apart from women during the monthly course, and do not approach them till they are clean. When they have cleansed themselves, then come unto them from whence God has commanded (amr) you.”* [By *naẓm*, we deduce that] the command (*amr*) in Q. 2:189 is to *enter houses from their [front] doors*, while the object of the command (*ma’mūr bihi*) in Q. 2:222 is to *come unto [women] from “their fronts.”* Otherwise, what could the command in Q. 2:222 be in reference to? – this is its meaning.²⁵

In other words, the general command (*amr*) in Q. 2:222 for men to *come unto [women] from whence God has commanded* is specified, by means of *naẓm*, by the earlier verse to *enter houses from their [front] doors* Q. 2:189. Hence – at the price of being much too explicit – Ibn Barrajān implies that men are commanded to carry out vaginal not anal intercourse with women, just as they must enter houses from their front doors and not their backdoors.

²³ Ibid., V, p. 410. In comparison with works on *naẓm* by later scholars, Ibn Barrajān’s analysis here is admittedly rudimentary. In addition, his use of terminology, much of which likely originates from works by Jurjāni (d. 471/1078 or 474/1081) and Bāqillāni (d. 403/1013), is inconsistent. For instance, he calls the thematic axis of a *sūra* either “signifiers of the *sūra*” (*dalā’il al-sūra*), “underpinning address of the *sūra*” (*ta’sīs al-khiṭāb*), “context of the *sūra*” (*siyāq al-sūra*), or “intention of the *sūra*” (*gharaḍ al-sūra*).

²⁴ *Īdāb*, ¶310.

²⁵ Ibid., ¶162. On aspect of Ibn Barrajān’s theory of *naẓm* that is worth noting is that he takes an interest in the exact purposes and meanings of the divine names that mark the end of many verses. These divine names act as “separators” (sing. *fāṣila*) between verses. Their function and meaning tie into his theory of *naẓm* since they are arranged in the *āya* for a purpose. E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 428.

Symmetrical harmony

The third type of *nazm* is less frequent. It occurs when two repetitious passages within a single sūra serve to uncover hidden meanings of the Qur'ān. For instance, in sūra 24 (al-Nūr), the assertion *And verily we have sent down to you signs making all clear (āyāt mubayyināt)* is twice repeated (verses 34 and 46). In proximity to these two verses are, the Verse of Light (35), and the descriptions of believers (37), unbelievers (39), and hypocrites (47). Ibn Barrajān speculates:

There are two types of light, visible and invisible, just as there are two types of unbelievers (*kāfir*): hypocrites or People of the Book and sheer unbelievers (*kāfir maḥḍ*). That is perhaps why this phrase [*And verily we have sent down to you signs making all clear*] is repeated in the beginning and end of the passage.

That is to say that the first verse (Q. 24:34) addresses the outer cosmic *signs making all clear*, while Q. 24:46 alludes to the inner *signs making all clear*, thus indicating an accordance.

The Theory of Abrogation (*naskh*)

An extensive body of Islamic exegetical literature pertaining to “abrogating and abrogated” (*nāsikh wa-mansūkh*) legal pronouncements in the Qur'ān developed as commentaries and glosses based upon the following emblematic verse:

Whatever verse We abrogate (nansakh) or We make forgotten (nunsihā) We will replace it with one better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that God is powerful over all things? (Q. 2:106)

Ibn Barrajān's stance on this subject is, to my knowledge, unprecedented. He not only dismisses the bulk of the discussion on *nāsikh wa-mansūkh*, but condemns earlier Qur'ān scholars who attempted to harmonize perceived legal contradictions of the Holy Book by indulging too often in *naskh*, thereby extending the intended utility of this theory far beyond its limits. That is, *naskh* was initially evoked as a solution to intratextual incongruities in the Qur'ān, but then became a problem in itself at the hands of Sunnī scholars.²⁶ Whereas classical Sunnī commentaries like that of Ṭabarī are replete with examples of *naskh*, Ibn Barrajān rejects most instances where the juridical ruling of one Qur'ānic verse is

²⁶ For a useful overview of the genre of *nāsikh wa-mansūkh*, see Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” pp. 117–138.

said to abrogate (*naskh*) another. Adhering to the premises of Qur'ānic coherence, he accepts the validity of *naskh* only when the abrogating verse (*nāsikh*) is adjoined to the abrogated (*mansūkh*) verse.²⁷ This being the case, he only concedes to approximately five instances of abrogation in the entire Qur'ān, and takes pains to refute every other case by reconciling their apparent contradictions.

Ibn Barrajan's stance against abrogation approximates that of the Mu'tazili-leaning exegete Abū Muslim al-Īṣbahānī (d. 322/934), who categorically denied the possibility of intra-Qur'ānic abrogation. But there is no evidence that Īṣbahānī who is often mentioned in uṣūlī discussions on *naskh* as an extreme case in point, had any influence upon Ibn Barrajan.²⁸ Moreover, the Sevillan master's stance on *naskh* was rooted in his doctrine of *naẓm*, which in turn has cosmological underpinnings as we saw in our discussion of the Universal Servant (Chapter 5). For Ibn Barrajan, therefore, the very structure of the Qur'ān, whose āyas are all systematically arranged into a cohesive and orderly compositional whole, precludes the possibility of one āya abrogating another unless it is *adjacent* to it. For if one verse could abrogate another that is situated elsewhere in the Qur'ān, an element of arbitrary disorderliness and ambiguity would be introduced to the revealed text.

Ibn Barrajan is not explicit about all the possible implications of his criticisms of the proponents of abrogation on the basis of *naẓm*. His reasoning for the wholesale rejection of Qur'ānic ambiguity raises several

²⁷ One case of abrogation has to do with offering alms to the Prophet upon visitation:

God said: *O ye who believe! When you hold conference with the messenger, offer an alms before your conference. That is better and purer for you. But if you cannot find the means, then God is Forgiving, Merciful.* (Q. 58:12) is abrogated by *Fear you to offer alms before your conference? Then, when you do it not and God has forgiven you, then perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God is aware of the things you do.* (Q. 58:13)

Another case of abrogation concerns Abraham's sacrifice of his son:

And when he had reached the age of running with him, he said, "My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice thee; consider, what thinkest thou?" He said, "My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shalt find me, God willing, one of the steadfast;" (Q. 37:102) is abrogated by *thou hast confirmed the vision; even so We recompense the good-doers.* (Q. 37:105).

²⁸ For instance, the Azhar-trained Ḥanbalī scholar, Mar'ī b. Yūsuf al-Karmī (d. 1033/1623), points out in his work on *naskh* that "a faction of Sufīs and a group among uṣūlī scholars such as Abū Muslim al-Īṣbahānī" categorically denied the possibility of abrogation in the Qur'ān. See *Qalā'id al-marjān*, p. 44.

questions. First, since Ibn Barraġān employs the theory of *nazm* to explain the underlying connections of a vast range of seemingly unrelated Qur'ānic passages, why then does he not apply the same method to explain how abrogative legal verses appear to be scattered throughout the Holy Text? That is, why does he not use *nazm* to explain the positioning of abrogative verses? Second, it is interesting to note that Ibn Barraġān is not troubled by the fact that certain legal verses – such as those that can be read as pertaining to the times of the daily prayers; e.g., Q. 2:238, 11:114, 17:78, 30:17, 50:39 – are scattered throughout the text in no apparent order.

One instance of abrogation, which Ibn Barraġān accepts as valid, concerns *firār*, that is, conditions that make it permissible for Muslim warriors to flee from the enemy on the battlefield. Verse 8:65 stipulates that a Muslim can only flee if he is outnumbered by 100 enemy combatants, whereas 8:66 lowers this ratio down to 10-to-1, thus abrogating the former. The two verses in question are:

*O Prophet, urge on the believers to fight. If there be twenty of you, patient men, they will overcome two hundred; if there be a hundred of you, they will overcome a thousand unbelievers, for they are a people who understand not; (Q. 8:65) which is abrogated by: Now God has lightened it for you, knowing that there is weakness in you. If there be a hundred of you, patient men, they will overcome two hundred; if there be of you a thousand, they will overcome two thousand by the leave of God; God is with the patient. (Q. 8:66)*²⁹

In this case, Ibn Barraġān aligns himself with jurists who consider flight from battle where Muslims are outnumbered by less than 10-to-1 to be a grave sin (*kabīra*).

Consistent with his stance on *naskh* and *nazm*, Ibn Barraġān takes pains to refute earlier authorities by showing how these presumably abrogated (*mansūkh*) verses still stand. Nevertheless, his refutations are always phrased with utmost courtesy, and he never discloses the names of scholars with whom he disagrees.³⁰ Also, it should be observed that in line with early second-/eighth-century authorities like Mujāhid (d. 104/722) and 'Aṭā' (d. 114/732),³¹ Ibn Barraġān tempers his perspective by attaching the label “temporarily suspended” (*āya munsa'a*) or “delayed” (*ta'khīr*) to verses which he does not accept as

²⁹ Ibid., p. 145.

³⁰ For examples of Ibn Barraġān's disagreements with scholars over the abrogation of specific verses (*naskh*), see *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 280–281, 419, 425, 433.

³¹ Gramlich, *Abu l-'Abbās b. 'Aṭā'*.

being abrogated, implying that their meanings would be divinely disclosed sometime in the future.³²

Since Ibn Barrajān rejects most cases of intra-Qur'ānic abrogation, it comes as no surprise that he denies the possibility of a Qur'ānic ruling being abrogated by the Sunna of the Prophet and his Companions. This principle is in fact shared by most Sunnī exegetes and uṣūlīs, since the Word of God is unquestionably more authoritative and legally binding than that of the Prophet and his Companions. But Ibn Barrajān takes this teaching one step further by holding the unconventional opinion that the verse on “temporary marriage” (*nikāḥ al-mut'a*) is not abrogated by the Prophet nor by 'Umar's prohibitions, but is rather “temporarily suspended” (*munsa'a*) and may be reinstated if necessary in times of war.³³ Interestingly, Ibn Ḥazm relates that Ibn Masarra's follower al-Ru'aynī also proclaimed the permissibility of *nikāḥ al-mut'a*,³⁴ an idea that may have been shared by other Andalusī Mu'tabirūn.

As well, Ibn Barrajān's discussion of Q. 2:182 concerning the Muslim fast (*ṣiyām*) is particularly interesting, since the Muslim fast underwent several stages, culminating in the command to fast the month of Ramadan. Ibn Barrajān concedes that God abrogated several rulings relating to the fast, instituting others in their stead. However, he rejects the idea that Qur'ānic rulings were abrogated. Instead, he maintains that the ancient rulings of the People of the Book were abrogated:

O believers, prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you – haply you will be godfearing – (Q. 2:182) God declared the prescribing of the fast upon Muslims generally. But the length of the *fast* would have been unknown had it not been for the words *even as it was prescribed for those that were before you*. So the Muslims were told to observe the fast of those [religious communities] who came before them. They used to fast and break the fast before the setting of the sun just like the Christians. Then God specified His general [command] by saying *then complete the Fast unto the night* (Q. 2:187), so Muslims began to commence their fast shortly after breaking it, so that when one of them finished his food or slept through a meal he would not return to it [until the next breaking of the fast]. This was a source of hardship for some Muslims, so God

³² See Ibn Barrajān's discussion of the root *nasa'a* vs. *nasiya*. He favors an interpretation of *munsa'a* as “delayed” verse. For a detailed discussion, see *Ibid.*, I, p. 257–258. This discussion comes up in the context of the aforementioned verse: *For whatever verse We abrogate or cause to be forgotten/delayed (nunsihā), We bring a better or the like of it* (Q. 2:106).

³³ For a concise overview of *mut'a* in tafsīr literature, see Maria Dakake's commentary on Q. 4:24 in *The Study Quran*, pp. 200–202.

³⁴ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fī al-mīlāl*, V, p. 67.

specified once again, *And eat and drink, until the white thread shows clearly to you from the black thread at the dawn* (Q. 2:187).

Moreover, Muslims would not touch their women nor have intercourse with them throughout the entire [month of] fasting. This was also a source of duress, so God again specified that, *Permitted to you, upon the night of the Fast, is to go in to your wives;—they are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them. God knew that you were betraying yourselves, so He relented unto you and pardoned you. So now lie with them, and seek what God has prescribed for you* (Q. 2:187).

When the Prophet came to Medina, he discovered that the Jews fasted on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, and that they obliged their children and young ones to do the same. So God specified His desire [for Muslims to fast] *the month of Ramadan, wherein the Qur’ān was sent down*. Before this verse was revealed, Muslims used to emulate the fast of the People of the Book, so God abrogated some of the rulings of the People of the Book. In all of this, there is nothing of the Qur’ān that is abrogated.³⁵

II HIERARCHY: FROM THE CELESTIAL TABLET TO THE WRITTEN PAGE

Hierarchical Levels of the Qur’ān

Ibn Barrajān’s staunch adherence to the hermeneutical principle of Qur’ānic harmony (*naẓm*) is undergirded by cosmological precepts, and guided by a particular understanding of the function of the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) vis-à-vis creation and revelation. He posits that the totality of existence is a “transcript” (*nuskha*) of the Preserved Tablet, or “Archetypal Book” (lit. “Mother of the Book,” *umm al-kitāb*). God inscribes His undifferentiated knowledge of everything that will come to be until the day of resurrection upon that “Book” by the Supreme Pen (*al-qalam al-‘alī*).³⁶ The universe is a physical differentiation (*tafṣīl*) of God’s undifferentiated (*mujmal*) knowledge inscribed upon that Archetypal Book.

³⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 396. For a historical treatment of how the practice of fasting emerged based on Qur’ānic evidence, see Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran*.

³⁶ Ibn Barrajān often speaks of three stages of inscription. “The first inscription (*katb*) is God’s primordial knowledge of His creation; then He inscribed the measure (*miqdār*) [of all things]; then He inscribed all that exists (*mā huwa kā’in*). Three inscriptions, upon three tablets, brought together by the greatest Tablet, written during three days of the Days of the Aeon (*ayyām al-dahr*) (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of the Aeon). The totality of the disconnected letters are signs of what is written upon the Clear Book.” *Īdāb*, ¶515.

The Qur'ān, for its part, is a “miniature transcript” that parses out the Archetypal Book from which all revelations descend.³⁷ Building on Ṭabarī's theory of revelation,³⁸ Ibn Barraḡān holds that the Qur'ān first descended as a fully formed whole, and then was revealed in piecemeal installments over the course of Muḥammad's twenty-three-year Prophetic mission like intermittent showers of rain.³⁹ The Qur'ān came down as a whole (*jumla*) from the Archetypal Book on the Night of Determination (*laylat al-qadr*, see Chapter 8) to the “Exalted Abode” (*bayt al-'izza*) in the sky of the earth (*samā' al-dunyā*). Its descent took place by means of different angelic envoys, or “Spirits,” and continues to reverberate in the hearts of believers:

The Qur'ān was sent down from the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quḍus*) to the Spirit from the Command (*al-rūḥ min al-amr*)⁴⁰ to the Spirit of the Heavenly Ascents (*rūḥ al-ma'ārij*) to [Gabriel] the Trustworthy Spirit (*rūḥ al-amin*), to the heart of the Messenger,⁴¹ to the hearts of the believers, then to their tongues and bodily parts by way of reading (*tilāwa*), recitation (*qirā'a*), and good deeds.⁴²

Ibn Barraḡān brilliantly grafts this classical Sunnī theory of revelation onto his mystical cosmology by using the language of *ijmāl* and *tafṣīl*, or “nondifferentiated unity” and “differentiated specificity.” He describes the revelation of the Word as a gradual descent into differentiation, a descent from unity to multiplicity. For God does not simply have a speaking apparatus that enunciates a sequence of Arabic words. His revelation is a divine speech act that communicates eternally. When divine speech descends into the cosmic realm, it does so in progressive stages of differentiation. At each stage of revelatory descent, the Word unfolds from the sheer undifferentiation and unexpressed unity of the divine Essence, to its initial differentiation and “inscription” by the Pen upon the Preserved Tablet, to its descent through each level of the cosmos, to the Exalted

³⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 201–202.

³⁸ Ṭabarī's understanding of the Qur'ān as being sent down in its entirety to the nearest heaven, and then coming down in parts, was formed in the background of the Mu'tazili-Ash'ari debate over the createdness of the Qur'ān. See Saleh, “A Piecemeal Qur'ān,” pp. 53–54.

³⁹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 475. See Ibn Barraḡān's discussions of “the places of the stars” (*mawāqī' al-nujūm*, Q 56:75) which he associates with the piecemeal “descents of revelations.” *Sharḥ*, I, p. 395; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, pp. 279–281; *Īdāh*, ¶935–937.

⁴⁰ Here, Ibn Barraḡān has in mind the verse *They will question thee concerning the Spirit. Say: 'The Spirit is of the command of my Lord'* (Q. 17:85).

⁴¹ This is a reference to Q. 2:97: *whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel: he it is who sent it down upon thy heart by God's permission.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, II, p. 568.

Abode, and then its final coagulation into pre-Arabic, then Arabic words that can be pronounced by the human tongue. “Each book,” that is, each cosmic unfolding of the revelation, “is differentiated from the one above it” (*mafṣūl mim mā fawqahu*) and encompasses it.⁴³

Ibn Barrajān anchors his notion of the Qur’ān’s multiple layers of differentiation in a plethora of conceptual categories and subdivisions which will be discussed below. Most importantly for him, “The Exalted Qur’ān” (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīz*) is the bulk of the text consisting of mutually resembling, or consimilar verses (*mutashābihāt*). This “Exalted” dimension of the Qur’ān is a differentiation (*tafṣīl*) of the “Supreme Qur’ān” (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīm*) which contains the non-differentiated (*mujmal*), synoptic verses and divine names of the Qur’ān (*muhkamāt*), which themselves are differentiations of the “disconnected letters” (*hurūf muqatta‘a*), which in turn are differentiations of the divine Word in the archetypal “Mother of the Book” (*umm al-kitāb*), the Preserved Tablet.

The “Supreme Qur’ān” Versus the “Exalted Qur’ān”

One of the most prevalent yet least noticed technical distinctions in Ibn Barrajān’s works is that between the “Supreme Qur’ān” (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīm*) and the “Exalted Qur’ān” (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīz*). These two technical terms, which he maintains are distinct throughout his exegetical works,⁴⁴ refer to two distinct stages of the Qur’ānic revelation’s differentiation from the Preserved Tablet. The first, the “Supreme Qur’ān,” is ontologically higher and engulfs the second in its compactness and universality. The Supreme Qur’ān is sum of the disconnected letters, the divine names and attributes mentioned in the Qur’ān,⁴⁵ and key synoptic passages such as:

God – there is no god but He. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful (Q 20:8) and He is God; there is no god but He. He is the King, the All-holy, the All-

⁴³ Ibn Barrajān’s vision of the Qur’ān may be visually compared to a set of multisized Russian matryoshka dolls, whereby each stage of revelation in this vertical hierarchy contains the ones within or beneath it.

⁴⁴ The doctrine of *al-qur’ān al-‘azīz* is mentioned repeatedly already in the *Sharḥ* and without explanation (e.g. *Sharḥ*, II, p. 22).

⁴⁵ “The Supreme Qur’ān” (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīm*) is discussed by González Costa, in “Un ejemplo de la hermenéutica sufí”; and by Fateh Hosni in his dissertation, pp. 69–71. For references to this term in the *Idārah*, see ¶18, 127, 128, 206, 426, 428, 569, 597, 666, 683, 726, 750, 812, 815, 831.

peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime. Glory be to God, above that they associate! He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him; He is the All-mighty, the All-wise. (Q. 59:23–24).⁴⁶

Ibn Barraĵān finds reference to his doctrine in the verse *We have given thee seven of the oft-repeated, and the Supreme Qur'ān* (Q 15:87); as well as in a ḥadīth from Imām Mālik's *Muwatta'* wherein the Prophet proclaims that God revealed to him a sūra "the likes of which is found neither in the Torah, the Gospels, the Psalms, nor the Qur'ān."⁴⁷ This sūra is al-Fātiḥa or Umm al-Qur'ān, and is identified as part of the "Supreme" dimension of the Qur'ān as well.⁴⁸

The Supreme Qur'ān is important because it represents the nondifferentiated core of the Qur'ān out of which the Exalted Qur'ān unfolds, such that,

a [seemingly] small portion of it expresses the entirety [of the Qur'ān]; and one nondifferentiated passage encompasses all [verses] into which the whole differentiates.⁴⁹

The Supreme Qur'ān is superior to the rest of the Qur'ān by virtue of its ontological proximity to the Preserved Tablet. And, while all of the Qur'ān's verses are "supreme,"⁵⁰ the divine names and synoptic verses of the Qur'ān are blessed with an intensified divine presence:

God dwells in His names [mentioned in the Supreme Qur'ān], as well as the meanings (*ma'ānī*), concomitants (*muqtaḍayāt*), and differentiations (*mā infaṣalat ilayhi*) of His exalted attributes just as the Spirit indwells bodies.⁵¹

To drive his point home, Ibn Barraĵān asserts that the Supreme Qur'ān corresponds in status to the Torah which "God inscribed with His hand" according to a ḥadīth.⁵² Uttering the Supreme Qur'ān is an antidote to spiritual diseases of the heart and soul, and its words possess a talismanic

⁴⁶ *Īdāb*, ¶597, 666. Elsewhere, Ibn Barraĵān states that the Supreme Qur'ān is contained in summary and in detail in certain chapters and verses, such as the Seven Repeated verses (*al-sab' al-mathānī*), sūra 112 (al-Ikhlās), verses 2:164, 2:186, Verse of the Footstool (*āyat al-kursī*), endings of sūra 2, beginnings of sūra 3, Q 3:18, beginnings of sūra 57, end of sūra 59, and verses of divine glorifications, praises, blessings, exaltations, like Q. 23:14, 40:63, 67:1, 43:85, 25:1–2. (*Īdāb*, ¶1150).

⁴⁷ Bukhārī, #4703; Tirmidhī, #3124; Ibn Ḥanbal, #8682.

⁴⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶726. See also *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 71–72. ⁴⁹ *Īdāb*, ¶1031.

⁵⁰ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 74. ⁵¹ *Īdāb*, ¶48.

⁵² *Ibid.*, ¶428. See Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Mawsū'a*, #5538; Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*, p. 301.

efficacy (*ruqya*) to heal the body.⁵³ When God states, *If We had sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain, thou wouldst have seen it humbled, split asunder out of the fear of God. And those similitudes— We strike them for men; haply they will reflect* (Q. 59:21), He is referring specifically to the Supreme Qur'ān. Similarly, in discussing the Prophet's exemplary character, Ibn Barrajān identifies the famous ḥadīth that states that “the Prophet's character was the Qur'ān”⁵⁴ with the Supreme Qur'ān. For the Qur'ān itself states, “*Surely thou art upon a supreme character* (khuluq 'azīm) (Q. 68:4), that is the character of the Supreme Qur'ān.”⁵⁵

Ibn Barrajān also makes an interesting connection between the “Supreme Qur'ān” (*al-qur'ān al-'azīm*) that encompasses the entire revelation, and the “Supreme Name of God” (*al-ism al-a'zam*) that embraces the realities of all the divine names. He argues on the basis of a Prophetic report that the synoptic verses Q. 2:255 and Q. 2:163 are part of the “Supreme Qur'ān” and contain the “Supreme Name of God.”⁵⁶ The emphasis on the exaltedness of verse Q. 2:255 bears striking resemblance to Tustarī's commentary on this verse, which he claims to have seen in a vision written across the sky of 'Abbādān on the Night of Determination (*laylat al-qadr*). Commenting on this verse, Tustarī writes: “*God, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Everlasting* (Q 2:255). This is the greatest verse in the Book of God. It includes the Most Supreme Name of God (*al-ism al-a'zam*) which is written in the sky with green light in a single line from east to west. I used to see it written like that in the Night of Determination (*laylat al-qadr*) when I was in 'Abbādān.”⁵⁷ This convergence may indicate some of Tustarī's influence on Ibn Barrajān's conception of the Qur'ān.

Ibn Barrajān employs the term “Exalted Qur'ān” (*al-qur'ān al-'azīz*) to denote the totality of the Qur'ānic revelation, including the *mutashābihāt* which unfold from the “Supreme Qur'ān.” The Exalted Qur'ān probably derives its name from the Exalted Abode (*bayt al-'izza*, lit. Abode of Exaltedness) discussed above. It excludes the divine names and synoptic verses of the Supreme Qur'ān, for it is an unpacking or differentiation

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ¶569.

⁵⁴ See Bukhārī, #994, #6310; Muslim, #746; Abū Dāwūd, #1342; Nasā'ī, #1601.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶426. ⁵⁶ See *Īdāb*, ¶127.

⁵⁷ See Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 49; *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, trans. Keeler and Keeler, p. 29. I am grateful to Aydogan Kars for drawing my attention to this plausible connection between Tustarī and Ibn Barrajān.

(*tafṣīl*) thereof.⁵⁸ The Exalted Qur’ān unpacks seven distinct themes that are condensed in the Supreme Qur’ān: (1) the divine command (*amr*),⁵⁹ (2) divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and its attributes and names, (3) oneness (*waḥdāniyya*), (4) lordship (*rubūbiyya*), divine blessings, the primordial covenant, affirming God’s lordship and His messengers, discerning between prophets and charlatans, (5) knowledge of worship according to the ordinances of the messengers, (6) fulfilling the trust (*amāna*) of the covenant, and (7) the crossing (*i’tibār*) which is key to unlocking the primordial covenant by way of knowledge, and through which one ascends to knowledge of certainty, then vision of the realities of faith with the eye of certainty.⁶⁰ In sum, the Exalted Qur’ān details the multiple facets of divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and prophecy (*risāla*),⁶¹ and “with its commands, prohibitions, and stories, it is both a reminder of the Supreme Qur’ān and a severance (*faṣl*) from it.”⁶²

“Compact” (*mubkamāt*) Versus “Consimilar” (*mutashābihāt*) Verses

In one of his most significant passages, Ibn Barraḡān describes the all-encompassing nature of the Qur’ān as follows:

Know with certainty that there is no created existent in the cosmos except that it is announced, denoted, alluded to, and declared by the Qur’ān (*yunbi’u bihi wa-yadullu ‘alayhi wa-yushīru ilayhi wa-yashhadu lahu*). [This is so] even though some allusions may be recondite (*daqīq*), and some declarations may be hidden (*istasarrat ba’d al-shahādāt*)—for this [principle] is general (*‘amm*) . . . God said: *We have neglected nothing in the Book* (Q. 6:38).⁶³

The comprehensiveness of the Qur’ān is not always apparent to the reader on account of its compactness. Ibn Barraḡān affirms that the all-encompassing revelation addresses itself anew to each and every

⁵⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶15, 17, 48, 70, 193, 194, 199, 360, 576, 701, 805, 816, 1026. Presumably, this term is derived from the verse *Those who disbelieve in the Remembrance when it comes to them – and surely it is a Book Exalted; falsehood comes not to it from before it nor from behind it; a sending down from One All-wise, All-laudable* (Q. 41:41–42). In content, the Exalted Qur’ān is a confirmation of *what was before it, guiding to the truth and to a straight path*, and it is called to *answer God’s summoner, and believe in Him, so that He will forgive you some of your sins, and protect you from a painful chastisement* (Q. 46:30–32).

⁵⁹ Ibn Barraḡān ambiguously refers his reader to the “previous *i’tibār*” for the first part. See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 83–84. The term *‘Ayn al-yaqīn* is a reference to Q. 102:7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 79. ⁶² *Īdāb*, ¶128. ⁶³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 103.

generation, generating simultaneously valid interpretations with every age.⁶⁴ For the Qur'ān “brings together” all knowledge (*qara'a* means “to bring together,” hence *qur'an*), just as it discriminates and “differentiates” all things from each other (*farraqa*, “to separate and discern” hence *furqān*).⁶⁵ Ibn Barrajān's understanding of the Qur'ān's comprehensiveness rests on his interpretation of the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*. He therefore devotes a considerable amount of his attention in the *Tanbīh* to verse Q. 3:7 around which discussions of these passages often revolve:

It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses muḥkamāt that are the Mother of the Book, and others mutashābihāt. As for those in whose hearts there is deviation, they desire that which tashābaha in it, desiring dissention (fitna) and desiring its interpretation (ta'wīl); but no one knows its interpretations except God and those firmly established in knowledge. They say: 'We believe in it, all that is from our Lord, but only men of understanding take heed.

Before putting forth his own view of the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*, Ibn Barrajān takes pains to reiterate interpretations of earlier authorities, noting for instance that Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), Mujāhid (d. 104/722), and Qatāda (d. 118/736) hold the *muḥkamāt* to mean “abrogating verses” (*nāsikhāt*) that convey juridical commands and prohibitions. According to Ibn 'Abbās, on the other hand, the *mutashābihāt* are the “abrogated verses” (*mansūkh*), or, according to Abū 'Ubayda (d. 210/825), “consimilar verses”;⁶⁶ or, according to Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 169/786) and Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714), “ambiguous verses” which are difficult to interpret (*ta'wīl*).⁶⁷

Ibn Barrajān strongly rejects the interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* as “ambiguous verses,” and contends that ambiguity lies in the eye of the beholder, not in the divine Word. For the more insight one has, the clearer the Qur'ān becomes:

⁶⁴ He states that “some meanings of the Qur'ān are only understood by the majority [of scholars] at the second return [of Christ] on account of the events which take place on that day [which are alluded to in the Qur'ān].” *Īdāh*, ¶295; this point is reiterated in ¶595.

⁶⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 105. For an excellent discussion of Qur'ān versus Furqān in the school of Ibn 'Arabī, see Chittick, “Stray Camels in China,” pp. 452–466. See also Saleh, “A Piecemeal Qur'ān,” for a discussion of the Qur'ān's revelation “in parts” as well as the terms *furqān* and *tafsīl* in the classical exegetical tradition.

⁶⁶ Like Ibn Barrajān, Abū 'Ubayda interprets *mutashābih* and *mutāshābihāt* to mean “mutually resembling” passages of the Qur'ān, and he understands *muḥkamāt* to mean “clear verses.” See *Majāz al-qur'ān*, I, pp. 34 (Q. 2:25), and p. 86 (Q. 3:7).

⁶⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 481–482.

Ambiguity is an attribute in us, not in the Clear Qur'ān, which God describes as *O mankind, a proof has now come to you from your Lord; We have sent down to you a most-clear light* (Q. 4:174) – but its [clarity] is an inner light that only discloses itself to God's chosen ones.⁶⁸

For Ibn Barrajān, then, the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* are not to be understood as “clear” versus “ambiguous” passages. He rather redefines the *muḥkamāt* as “compact” or “firmly fixed” passages that stem from the “Mother of the Book” (*umm al-kitāb*). They are intermediaries between the archetypal source of revelation and the Qur'ān, since they are fixed in the Mother of the Book and descend to the Qur'ān. The outspreading and differentiation of the *muḥkamāt* into ordinary, consimilar verses gives rise to the *mutashābihāt* which represent the bulk of the Qur'ānic text. In their repetition, the *mutashābihāt* stand as testimony to the inimitability of the divine Word. Echoing similar statements by Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and his contemporaneous Persian Baghawī (d. 510/1122),⁶⁹ he states that the *mutashābihāt*:

Resemble one another (*tashabbaha ba'ḍuhunna ba'dan*) in inimitability (*i'jāz*), beauty of [chronological] sequence (*ḥusn al-sard*), fine [thematic] arrangement (*karīm al-naẓm*), truthful guidance, and lucid clarity.⁷⁰

Most verses of the Qur'ān are *mutashābihāt*. They stand as proof of the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz*), just as they confirm and corroborate each other in truth and divine origin – *Will they not, then, contemplate this Qur'ān? Had it issued from any but God, they would surely have found in it many an inconsistency!* (Q. 4:82). Ibn Barrajān maintains that the meanings of the consimilar verses can be unveiled to those who master the sciences of uṣūl and Ḥadīth, and who ponder the patterns of Qur'ānic *naẓm*.

Ibn Barrajān argues for the validity of his interpretation of the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* on linguistic grounds. He points out that the word *mutashābih*, an active participle of the root verb *SH-B-H*, appears in the Qur'ān twice and clearly means “consimilar.”⁷¹ Morphologically, he argues that *mutashābih* is not derived from the fourth verb form

⁶⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶200. ⁶⁹ *EQ*, “Ambiguous,” (Kinberg). ⁷⁰ *Īdāb*, ¶193.

⁷¹ *It is He who sent down upon you the book, wherein are verses clear (āyāt muḥkamāt) that are the mother of the book (umm al-kitāb), and others ambiguous (mutashābihāt) (Q. 3:7). Many exegetes remark that Q. 39:23 appears to contradict Q. 3:7, in that all verses are characterized as being mutashābih: God has sent down the fairest discourse as a book consimilar (kitāban mutashābihan). So does Q. 11:1, in which all verses are described as clear: a book whose verses are set clear (uḥkimat āyātuhu).*

ashbaha – whence *shubha* (obfuscation) and *mushtabih* (obfuscated). Rather, the term derives from the sixth form *tashābaha* – whence *shabah* (similarity) and *mutashābih* (consimilar) – which denotes mutual resemblance or “to become consimilar.”

He also marshals several intra-Qur’ānic proofs for his interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* as consimilars:

The People of the Book told Moses *we will not believe thee till we see God openly* (Q. 2:55); God said in response *their hearts are consimilar (tashābahat qulūbuhum)* (Q. 2:118), that is, their hearts are alike in unbelief and rebelliousness, and so they resemble each other in words. In like manner, the Qur’ān is exaltedly described as being consimilar (*tashābaha al-qur’ān*) from beginning to end, just as all the parts of existence are consimilar in testimony to their Maker and in prostration to their Author. . . . But most people [i.e., scholars] were duped (*lubs*) by the close [semantic] resemblance between “consimilar” (*mutashābih*) and “obfuscated” (*mushtabih*).⁷²

[The second proof lies] in the verse: *It is He who produces gardens trellised, and untrellised, palm-trees, and crops diverse in produce, olives, pomegranates, each to each are consimilar and dissimilar (mutashābih wa-ghayr mutashābih)*. Here, God states that the branches of the trees interlock because these trees grow [closely together] on a single plot of land, and so the branches are indiscernible from each other (*ashbahat*, not *tashābahat*) and cannot be distinguished by the onlooker (*ay ashkalat ‘alā muta’ammilihā*). The term “consimilar” (*al-mutashābih*) is derived from the verb “to be similar” (*ashbaha*) [not from the verb “to obfuscate” (*ishtabaha*)]—so they are the “consimilar verses” in my view.⁷³

[Finally], sometimes, the Qur’ān calls something that is consimilar (*mutashābih*) an obfuscation (*mushtabih*)—but only in relation to its corresponding object. For instance *Or have they ascribed to God associates who created as He created, so that creation is all obfuscated (lit. consimilar) to them (fa-tashābah al-khalq ‘alayhim)?* (Q. 13:16) It can be said “such-and-such became consimilar to me” (*tashābah al-amr ‘alayya*) to mean “it became ambiguous to me” (*ashkal ‘alayya*). Thus, ambiguity (*ishkāl*) is in the eye of the beholder (*muta’ammil*), not in that which is beheld . . . (*muta’ammal*).⁷⁴

Ibn Barrajān compares the compact *muḥkamāt* to drops of rainwater that descend from heaven, giving life to consimilar (*mutashābihāt*) organisms:

The ordered arrangement of the Qur’ān resembles the differentiation of rainwater which descends from heaven to earth, and gives life to plants, animals and humans. God says, *And on the earth are tracts neighbouring each to each, and gardens of vines, and fields sown, and palms in pairs, and palms single, watered with one water; and some of them We prefer in produce above others. Surely in that are signs for a people who understand* (Q. 13:4). So first comes the water,

⁷² *Īdāb*, ¶194. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, ¶194. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶195.

which corresponds to the compact (*muḥkam*) disconnected letters, as well as the Qur'ānic divine names which, analogous to the rainwater, differentiate into different [consimilar *mutashābihāt*] meanings and purposes. Thus, the compact verses differentiate into consimilar verses and are above them [in rank].⁷⁵

Our author also compares the compact verses (*muḥkamāt*) to roots of trees that are firmly sunk into the grounds of the Archetypal Book. The consimilar verses (*mutashābihāt*) are the interlocking branches of these trees which are hard to distinguish from each other. To tell them apart one must trace each back to its root (*aṣl*) in the compact soil of the Archetypal Book.⁷⁶ Those who possess certainty (*mūqinūn*) and mastery of the prerequisite exoteric and esoteric sciences⁷⁷ can, with God's help, access the Clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) from the differentiated verses of the Qur'ān.⁷⁸ One of the keys to discerning the consimilar verses is to scrutinize the Qur'ān using *uṣūl* and *Ḥadīth*. This is confirmed by the verse: *and We have sent down to thee the Remembrance that thou mayest make clear to mankind what was sent down to them; and so haply they will reflect* (Q. 16:44).⁷⁹ Ibn Barraḡān's insistence on the centrality of *Ḥadīth* as "antidote" (*shifā'*)⁸⁰ to the disease of Qur'ānic ambiguity brings to mind his earlier work *al-Irshād*, which is devoted to the concordance between Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* and which aims at securing the primacy of *Ḥadīth* in the understanding of the Qur'ān.

The "Disconnected Letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*)

Ibn Barraḡān's interpretation of the "disconnected letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*)⁸¹ at the head of various sūras of the Qur'ān accords with his understanding of the downward, cosmic differentiation of revelation. As stated above, he reminds his reader that "each book," that is, each stage of the Qur'ān's descent into the cosmos, "is differentiated from the one above it" (*maḥṣūl mim mā fauqahu*). Therefore the "cosmological

⁷⁵ Quoted from *Tanbīh* in Hosni, *Manhaj*, p. 153.

⁷⁶ For a more complete elaboration on this analogy, cf. *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 546–547.

⁷⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I 1, pp. 489–490. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 103. ⁷⁹ *Īdāh*, ¶200.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶196.

⁸¹ Ibn Barraḡān also calls the disconnected letters the "dotted letters" (*ḥurūf mu'jama*) (e.g., Nūn ن, Qāf ق, Yā' ي) even though many of the disconnected letters are not dotted (E.g. Lām ل, Kāf ك). The reason for this is that the letters of the Arabic consonantal are distinguished from other scripts by its dots, so the term "dotted letters" is often used synonymously with the Qur'ān's "disconnected" letters. (e.g., *Īdāh*, ¶804). For an excellent overview of the disconnected letters in exegetical literature, see Nguyen, "Exegesis of the *ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*."

Qur'ān" situated in the Exalted Abode represents an intermediate stage of differentiation (*wāsiṭa*) between the sheer unity of the Archetypal Book and complete differentiation of the terrestrial Qur'ān.⁸² Prior to its descent into terrestrial existence, Ibn Barrajan speculates that the intermediate Qur'ān was not yet expressed as an Arabic text. It comprised the "disconnected letters," out of which the revelation then unfolded in the language of the Arabs. "For," as he explains, "it is not necessary for that Exalted Qur'ān which was closer in existence to the Preserved Tablet to have been revealed in the tongue of the Arabs."⁸³ Despite its descent through multiple cosmic levels, the terrestrial Qur'ān retains traces of its higher modalities. Its most sublime and nondifferentiated passages are the "disconnected letters" which are part of the compact (*muḥkamāt*) verses of the "Supreme Qur'ān." Then follow the ordinary and consimilar (*mutashābihāt*) verses of the "Exalted Qur'ān," which is the lowest level of differentiation of the Archetypal Book.

Ibn Barrajan presents his reader with a unique approach to the mysterious disconnected letters of the Qur'ān. His approach is neither a purely "classical Sufi" approach to the Arabic letters, nor the kind of occult-theosophic letter mysticism found in the Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī tradition and in the works of Ibn Masarra and others.⁸⁴ His interpretations combine elements from both traditions, and are anchored in his inversed reinterpretation of the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* as compact/nondifferentiated and consimilar/differentiated verses. There are also striking similarities between Ibn Barrajan's understanding of the letters and that of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī (d. 525/1131), writing at the same time at the Persian realm of the Muslim world.⁸⁵

He finds scriptural support for this approach to the letters in his literal reading of certain Qur'ānic passages. God swears by the disconnected

⁸² *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, pp. 510–511. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 5–6.

⁸⁴ See Ebstein and Sviri's comparative typology of letter mysticism in Islam, "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*."

⁸⁵ The Persian mystic 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, writing in the Eastern lands of Islam, envisions the entire Qur'ān as a series of "disconnected" (*muqatta'*) letters. The higher one ascends cosmologically, the more disconnected the Qur'ān becomes until finally the text is reduced to simple, nondifferentiated "dots." 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's understanding of the Qur'ān as issuing from singular unity out of which dots, then disconnected letters, then a compositional (*tadwīnī*) Qur'ān emerge bear striking similarities with Ibn Barrajan. Notwithstanding significant differences between the two authors (for instance, the "dots" do not feature prominently in Ibn Barrajan's discussions about the disconnected letters) it is possible that both authors drew from a common pool of writings or ideas. For a discussion of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's interpretation of the letters, see Rustom's forthcoming study, entitled *Inrushes of the Spirit: The Mystical Theology of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt*.

letters repeatedly, and states: *Ṭā'-Sīn-Mīm: those are the signs of the Clear Book* (Q. 26:1–2), signs that is, of the Archetypal Book.⁸⁶ Or again, *Alif-Lām-Rā': A Book whose verses are compact, and then differentiated* (11:1). In other words, the disconnected letters *Alif-Lām-Rā'* are firmly fixed in the Archetypal Book, then differentiated through their descent into the lower reaches of the cosmos. The disconnected letters are signs of God that are rooted (*uḥkimat*) in the Archetypal Book. They are “fixed” verses (*muḥkamāt*) that then (*thumma*) become differentiated into the consimilar (*mutashābihāt*) verses of the Qur'ān. Thus, there is nothing ambiguous about the disconnected letters. It is rather the excessive light of clarity that blinds most Qur'ān exegetes from correctly interpreting them. These resplendent signs (*āyāt*) are broadest in their encompassment (*a'amm 'umūman*), and “more real” (*abaqq ḥaqīqa*) in their rootedness in the Preserved Tablet. As “compact verses” (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) of universal import, the disconnected letters, through their intermediacy, afford believers a glimpse of the multiple stages of revelation's unfolding from sheer unity into the realm of multiplicity.⁸⁷ The disconnected letters convey something of the properties of the Qur'ān, or what it “sounded” like “up there” in its state of nondifferentiation in the Tablet. They are the “rope of continuity” between both worlds,⁸⁸ and the closest approximation that humans possess to the “divine letters” etched upon the Preserved Tablet by the Supreme Pen. The letters are so condensed, compact, and all-comprehensive that they can only be alluded to by the intellect, approached through faith, and deciphered through symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Yet they are not ambiguous:

Despite the difficulty of understanding the disconnected letters, God did not give us cause to despair in attaining knowledge about them, nor did the Messenger of God forbid us from engaging in knowing them, and seeking to understand their intended meanings. Rather, God commanded His prophet to explain and convey to people that which He revealed, and these letters are parts of His revelation. They bring together that which the Qur'ān encompasses. So the Prophet's elucidations of the other Qur'ānic verses amounts to an elucidation of the disconnected letters. It is thus that the Prophet conveyed [God's message] to his community.⁸⁹

The disconnected letters denote all types of divine address, including knowledge of God's names, attributes, commands, prohibitions, threats, parables, promises, general and specific, outward and inward,

⁸⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, IV, pp. 201–202. ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 58–59.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 297–298. ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 514.

differentiated and nondifferentiated messages.⁹⁰ In their universality, they encapsulate the entirety of all revealed books.⁹¹ They are even comparable to the divine names, which are the roots of all reality.⁹² Given the broad scope of the letters, Ibn Barrajān is receptive to a wide array of simultaneous interpretations for each of them.⁹³ One way to understand and parse them out is to examine the broad themes of the sūras that they precede. That is, in order to decipher their meanings, one may begin with the broad themes of the sūra, and then ascend into ever broader meanings on that basis.

In the *Tanbīh*, Ibn Barrajān does not dwell on how his theory of the letters works in practice. For instance, he mentions that the letters *Alif-Lām-Mīm* of sūra 2 (al-Baqara) make known the Creator, guidance, and requirements thereof, and praise (*ḥamd*) of God with all that it entails – for these, according to Ibn Barrajān, are the basic themes of that sūra.⁹⁴ However, he does not explain how exactly letter Alif, for instance, corresponds to themes within that sūra:

Since the disconnected letters are *signs of the Clear Book* (Q 12:1) (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*), and also signs of the noble Qur'ān, it must necessarily be that they express the beautiful names and exalted attributes of God, for that is the opening place of all light and existence. Consequently, the [disconnected letters] must also express the requirements of the names (*muqtaḍayāt al-asmā'*) which come into existence through them, for all things exist through them . . . so we should not deny that among these disconnected letters are names for existent things which are more real and more genuine in existence in the summits of created things. Thus, God's statement *Yā-Sīn* is [on account of its all-comprehensiveness] a name for the Universal Servant . . . and the Universal Servant encompasses all of the universe.⁹⁵

In his last work the *Īdāḥ*, Ibn Barrajān focuses more systematically on an applied alliterative interpretation of the disconnected letters. When he states, for instance, that “*Mīm* is for *Mulk*, dominion” he uses an alliterative approach to point out the overlapping themes contained in the letter and its sūra.⁹⁶ Whereas in the *Tanbīh* Ibn Barrajān usually discusses how the letters are broader cosmological containers of revelation, in the *Īdāḥ* he

⁹⁰ Ibid., III, p. 474. ⁹¹ Ibid., IV, p. 224. ⁹² Ibid., III, pp. 170–171.

⁹³ E.g., compare his interpretations of Tā-Hā in *Īdāḥ*, ¶596, 599, 605.

⁹⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 97–103; Compare with Ibid., I, pp. 471–476.

⁹⁵ *Īdāḥ*, ¶720–22.

⁹⁶ E.g., Alif-Lām-Rā' (sūra 10, Yūnus): “Alif is God's landmark (*alam*) among existents, Lām is for dominion (*mulk*) which is all created things, and whose coming together expresses His name Allāh; and the Rā' is an announcement of recalling the message, warning, remembrance, light (*dhikr al-risāla, indbār, dhikr, nūr*), and what follows from

attempts to explain how the disconnected letters actually contain the themes of the sūra. His alliterative interpretation is usually informed by the verses that immediately follow the disconnected letters, or by the general themes of that sūra. Therefore Ibn Barrajān can interpret Ḥā-Mīm, for instance, very differently in sūras 40 (Ghāfir) and 44 (al-Dukhān), without any apparent contradiction.⁹⁷

It should also be noted that Ibn Barrajān tries to harmonize his understanding of the letters with the doctrine of *nazm*. He seeks to demonstrate that all disconnected letters are placed alongside one another in a perfect arrangement that is suitable to the meanings conveyed by the sūra. Finally, it is notable that, unlike many theoreticians of philosophical mysticism in al-Andalus both before and after, he does not consider the “science of the letters” to be an exclusive esoteric branch of learning of the spiritual elect. He speaks of the “science of the letters” as a relatively straightforward discipline that is accessible to anyone with an understanding of cosmology and the principles of Arabic phonetics. And, like any genuine field of study, the science of the letters leads to a more profound understanding of the divine reality. He does not conceive of the letters as keys to unlocking hidden secrets of the Qur’ān, but rather as exemplifications of higher, broader, and more universal meanings parsed out by the Exalted Qur’ān itself. The letters do not herald secret mystical meanings in and of themselves that are necessarily more profound than the ordinary passages. Understanding the disconnected letters is, to Ibn Barrajān’s eyes, a very advanced level of religious literacy since they are the broadest, clearest, and most universal vehicles of divine knowledge. But, because Ibn Barrajān’s interpretation of the letters is so consistent and unitary, he does not feel the need to dwell on them as he progresses in his two Qur’ān commentaries. Toward the end of the *Tanbīh*, he merely alludes in passing to the meanings of the letters by way of reminder but refrains from repetitious elaborations. The letters thus should not be considered as central to Ibn Barrajān’s mystical teachings – they fit perfectly into his scheme, but do not occupy much of his thought.⁹⁸

The Primacy of Sūras 1 (al-Fātiḥa) & 2 (al-Baqara)

In addition to the “vertical” hierarchy of differentiations of the Preserved Tablet into the Supreme Qur’ān and Exalted Qur’ān, the *mubkamāt*

that; and especially among the names Lord (*rabb*) and Governor (*mudabbir*.)” *Idāb*, ¶465.

⁹⁷ *Idāb*, ¶793, 826. ⁹⁸ E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 492.

and *mutashābihāt*, and the disconnected letters, Ibn Barrajān posits a “horizontal” hierarchy among the sūras. Sūra 1 (al-Fātiḥa), which is the “Mother” or “Head” (*umm*) of the Qur’ān, “heads” (*ta’ummu*) the rest of the Qur’ān and contains all of its meanings in an undifferentiated mode. Sūra 1 is supreme because it contains the seven all-comprehensive divine names:

The Mother of the Qur’ān contains seven sections, seven verses ... and seven names. Five of the names are apparent: God (*Allāh*), Lord (*Rabb*), Merciful (*Rahmān*), Compassionate (*Rahīm*), and King (*Malik*). Another is implied by the attribute of praise (*ḥamd*), Praiseworthy (*ḥamīd*), and the last is hidden between the attribute and the name in *praise belongs to Allāh*, and *the Merciful the Compassionate* (Q. 1:3); it is declared by *Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succor* (Q. 1:5). This is the Supreme Qur’ān which was [according to a ḥadīth] “granted to Muḥammad.” ... these seven names are the Seven Repeated (*sab’ al-mathānī*).⁹⁹

Consequently, Sūra 1 communicates something of the ineffable divine Essence. Its content,

Cannot be demarcated by the insightful intellect, nor contained by the Preserved Tablet—but only by God’s exalted knowledge ... for temporally originated knowledge (*‘ilm muḥdath*) and even the Preserved Tablet cannot encompass the knowledge of God’s Essence (*‘ilm dhāt ‘Llāh*).¹⁰⁰

The surest way of comprehending this mysterious sūra is by studying sūra 2 (al-Baqara), which is a differentiation of sūra 1. Similarly, sūras 3 (Āl ‘Imrān) through 114 (al-Nās) parse out the meanings of sūra 2. In his words:

Sūra 1 encompasses the entire Qur’ān in a summary fashion (*muḥmal*). Sūra 2 encompasses the entire Qur’ān since it differentiates sūra 1. The rest of the Qur’ān is a detailing, elucidation, and commentary [on sūra 2].¹⁰¹

Ibn Barrajān’s conception of the Qur’ān is perhaps best illustrated by the image of a three-dimensional pop-up book. Each of its parts is deliberately prearranged into a neat, multilayered structure. When the pop-up book is closed, it is in a state of nondifferentiated unity comparable to the prerevealed Qur’ān in the Preserved Tablet. The opening of the book causes gradual unfoldings, transformations, and differentiations. The cover of the book, or the Preserved Tablet, never changes. Yet its opening

⁹⁹ Ibid., I, p. 74. ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., I, p. 117.

¹⁰¹ Hosni, *Manhaj*, p. 41. Given the importance of sūra 2 as an intermediary between sūra 1 and the remainder of the Qur’ān, Ibn Barrajān devotes almost one fourth of the *Tanbih* to it.

causes expansions of the compact folds within. Moreover, certain parts allow the viewer to see through the entire book to the back: these are the disconnected letters. They are peepshow openings, as it were, into the Preserved Tablet whence it all emerged.

Protological and Eschatological Modes of Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)

The Qur'ān's hierarchical unfolding across various levels of cosmic descent informs Ibn Barraġān's unique understanding of "*ta'wīl*," a term that is often translated as "allegorical" or "symbolic" interpretation of the Qur'ān. These translations, however, do not always capture Ibn Barraġān's intended meaning. For he considers his principal role as an exegete to excavate both the external philological meanings of the consimilar verses (*mutashābihāt*), as well as the universal meanings of the compact verses (*muḥkamāt*).¹⁰² He explains that the term *ta'wīl* derives from verbal noun of the second form of the trilateral root 'W-L ("to derive from," "to return) or W-'L ("to take refuge with," "to hasten to"). Therefore there are two modes of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). The first corresponds to the root 'W-L, whence the adjective *awwal* or "first." *Ta'wīl* in this case is protological, for it denotes "understanding the firstness (*awwaliyya*) of a verse," that is, tracing its meaning through its levels of descent back to its nondifferentiated origin in the Preserved Tablet. Therefore when a Qur'ānic verse discusses realities that are either above or before cosmic existence, such as the preeternal Primordial Covenant, revelation, prophecy, or God's names and attributes which are above time and space, then the exegete must attempt to grasp their "firstness" (*awwaliyya*) or their original precosmic state. For instance, the Qur'ānic Prophets Yūsuf

¹⁰² The process of uncovering these meanings, however, is not always associated with *ta'wīl*. While the term is used dozens of times in both tafsīrs, it does not figure into many of his important doctrinal discussions nor is it central to his exegetical hermeneutics. On rare occasions, Ibn Barraġān is critical of the loose hermeneutics of Ismā'īlī esoterists (*bāṭiniyya*) who reinterpret revelation on the basis of personal preference. He calls their maligned practice *ta'wīl*, in reference to the verse *As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the resembling passages, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation* (*ta'wīl*). But the Qur'ān also employs the term *ta'wīl* in a positive sense, and throughout most of Ibn Barraġān's exegetical corpus this term generally means "inner interpretation." For examples of *ta'wīl* in the *Tanbīh* (ed. Mazyadī), see I, pp. 221–222 (*ta'wīl* of the cow); IV, pp. 145–150 (the verse of light), p. 214 (*ta'wīl* of characters from sūra 12), p. 473 (*ta'wīl* of Q. 36:41); V, p. 191–192 (*ta'wīl* of Q. 45:5), p. 369 (*ta'wīl* of Q. 68:42). See also *Īdāh*, ¶93, 162, 196–198, 378, 386–388, 413, 435–436, 476, 506, 512–513, 578, 589, 591, 595, 825, 854, 878, 887, 892, 899, 903, 933.

and Ya'qūb were endowed with an ability to interpret dreams (*ta'wīl al-aḥādīth*, Q 12:6, 12:21), and could trace the meaning of dreams back to their origin in the Preserved Tablet. The second mode of *ta'wīl* is eschatologically oriented, and corresponds to the root W-'-L, whence *ma'āl* or “final destination.” Here, interpretation entails understanding the lastness or final destination of a verse in the Hereafter. For instance, passages relating to recompense, reward and punishment, life and after-life, resurrection and postsurrection, must be interpreted in relation to their ultimate “lastness.”¹⁰³

Even though Ibn Barrajān distinguishes conceptually between these two modes of *ta'wīl*, for the most part he does not specify which one he has in mind when interpreting a relevant verse. That is, he lets the reader surmise whether his *ta'wīl* aims at uncovering the firstness or lastness of a verse. Often he employs the phrase “the *ta'wīl* of this verse from the viewpoint x” (*ta'wīl al-āya min ḥādhā al-wajh*) before his analysis, thereby recognizing that his interpretation is one among many possibilities. The following is an example of his eschatological *ta'wīl*. It is essentially an allegorical interpretation of verse Q. 22:31:

God says: *Whosoever associates with God anything, it is as though he has fallen from the sky and the birds snatch him away, or the wind sweeps him headlong onto a far-off place* (Q. 22:31). The inner interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the sky is divine unity (*tawḥīd*); *the birds snatching him away* are the misguiding devils who urge him to follow the winds of his caprice; and *the wind sweeping him headlong* is the deed that distances from God; and the *far-off place* is Hell—may we be spared from it by His mercy.¹⁰⁴

Ibn Barrajān's neat theoretical distinction between protological and eschatological *ta'wīl* is useful in understanding his general approach to the Qur'ān. However, when one examines his tafsīr it is apparent that he adopts one of three strategies to draw out inner meanings of scripture. His first strategy is to reread a Qur'ānic verse or ḥadīth hyperliterally. This mystical hyperliteralism is used especially to find scriptural attestation for his ontology, as discussed in Chapter 5. Ibn Barrajān's second approach is to interpret a verse metaphorically, such as his comparison of the revivifying effect of rainwater to the awakening of souls by revelation.¹⁰⁵ And his third approach is to shed light on a verse by introducing an *alternative*

¹⁰³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 493–494. ¹⁰⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 350.

¹⁰⁵ “So behold the traces of God's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after it was dead (Q. 30:50) – this is [the effect of] water. *The traces of God's mercy* can also be a description of revelation, and *the earth* denotes the bodies and limbs; and the *giving of life to them* is through acts of obedience, faith, and submission.” *Tanbīh*, Mazyadī ed., IV, p. 350.

literal (not hyperliteral) interpretation of one of its keywords. Typically, he justifies his introduction of this alternative literal meaning by drawing attention to a different verse or ḥadīth in which the keyword is used in that alternative sense. The following two examples illustrate his alternative literal reading of scripture:

In a well-known ḥadīth narrated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, God “‘Continues to place [people] in Hell, and it will say, ‘Are there any more?’ until the Overbearing (*Jabbār*) stomps His foot in Hell, and its parts come together and it says, ‘Enough! Enough! Enough!’” [Ibn Barrajan states:] “The appropriate interpretation of the foot (*ta’wīl qadam*) is tendered by the verse *and give thou good tidings to the believers that they have a sure footing* (*qadam ṣidq*) *with their Lord* (Q. 10:2); so the foot should be understood [not as a physical foot but] as ‘that which God put forth in the beginning of the affair’ (*mā qad qaddamahu fī qudmat al-amr*) when He said *verily My mercy overcomes My wrath*.”¹⁰⁶

The second example: “*And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice* (Q 37:107) . . . God described the *sacrificed* ram (*kabsh*) as *mighty* . . . the *kabsh* is interpreted (*ta’wīl*) as the noble, respected, and acclaimed man; [for according to an alternative lexicographic meaning,] the *kabsh* of a people is their leader . . . and the Messenger of God said ‘On the Day of Resurrection, death shall be brought forth in the form of a *kabsh* [then sacrificed].’”¹⁰⁷

III HEGEMONY: THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRIMACY OF THE QUR’ĀN

The Qur’ān Is Its Own Interpreter

Ibn Barrajan’s first and foremost exegetical source is the Qur’ān itself. He often takes account of its competing meanings, accommodating them equally and without excluding one over the other. Sometimes he observes that the meaning of an āya oscillates between two contradictory meanings. Given his fixation on *naẓm*, most examined āyas are juxtaposed with, or defined in relation to one or several others. Ibn Barrajan excelled at this type of intratextual exegesis, drawing links between disparate passages of the Qur’ān for explanatory purposes. This is particularly apparent in his analysis of synoptic verses (*āyāt mujmala*), which he parses out by drawing on thematically related topics addressed in the “differentiated verses” (*āyāt mufaṣṣala*). For instance, verse 2:124 vaguely alludes to Abraham’s being tested *with certain words, and he*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 81–82. Similar interpretations are presented in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā. See Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, pp. 105–109.

¹⁰⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 505.

fulfilled them. Ibn Barrajan notes that the exact words of his test are stated in 53:36–53.¹⁰⁸ This type of intra-Qur'anic exegesis caught the eye of later authorities. The following illustrative example is one of his most famous passages where he puts forth an unprecedented interpretation of Q 17:1 in reference to Q 27:8 and Q 20:12 in order to highlight the sanctity of the city of Jerusalem:

God says: *Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs.* (Q.17:1) It may be that that land was called *holy* and *blessed* on account of the self-disclosure of the Blessed and All-Holy (*tajallī al-Mubārak al-Quddūs*) therein to Moses and His speaking to him at that place. For God says: *So, when he came to it, he was called: 'Blessed is he who is in the fire, and its precincts* (Q. 27:8); and *I am thy Lord; put off thy shoes; thou art in the holy valley, Towa* (Q.20:12). Therefore it is not farfetched to say that God caused the blessedness of His self-disclosure to dwell there until Judgment Day.¹⁰⁹

The Qur'ān is both a supportive and suppressive text, and its epistemological primacy is evident throughout Ibn Barrajan's works. He states unequivocally that it is the most authentically preserved, hence most reliable revealed text accessible to mankind. He affirms, moreover, the Qur'ān's superiority vis-à-vis previously revealed scriptures. Being the last, it embraces and guards (*muhaymin*) all preceding revelations from error. He counsels his reader,

Whenever you desire to read the Torah, the Gospel, Scrolls of Abraham, Moses, Noah, Sālih, or any prophet or messenger, then read the Qur'ān [instead]. For it is God's straight path to which all previously sent [messengers] were guided.¹¹⁰

A notable feature of Ibn Barrajan's scholarship is his consistent use of the Holy Book as a litmus test to substantiate the veracity of non-Qur'anic

¹⁰⁸ ... *And Abraham, he who paid his debt in full, That no soul laden bears the load of another, and that a man shall have to his account only as he has laboured, and that his labouring shall surely be seen, then he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense, and that the final end is unto thy Lord, and that it is He who makes to laugh, and that makes to weep, and that it is He who makes to die, and that makes to live, and that He Himself created the two kinds, male and female, of a sperm-drop, when it was cast forth, and that upon Him rests the second growth, and that it is He who gives wealth and riches, and that it is He who is the Lord of Sirius, and that He destroyed Ad, the ancient, and Thamūd, and He did not spare them, and the people of Noah before – certainly they did exceeding evil, and were insolent and the Subverted City He also overthrew.* (53:36–53) cf. Hosni, *Manhaj*, pp. 41–42.

¹⁰⁹ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadi, III, p. 363. ¹¹⁰ *Idāb*, ¶910.

sources. His principle of “Qur’ānic hegemony” is an expansive and accommodating hermeneutical tenet to which he adheres throughout his writings. Virtually any body of knowledge that aligns with his reading of the Qur’ān can be taken as a source of inspiration. The eclectic spectrum of sources used by Ibn Barrajan stems from this principle, which, in the end, validates his broadminded understanding of the meaning of “revelation” (*wahy*) not only as the Qur’ānic text, but also pre-Islamic scriptures – discussed in Chapter 7 – natural signs, and any form of knowledge that ultimately flows from the divine including Qur’ānic sciences (*tafsīr*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *qirā’āt*), Ḥadīth, experiential mystical insights, and disciplines like the science of the letters.

Variant Readings (*qirā’āt*) and the Seven Lectiones (*abruf*)

Like so many medieval Andalusi scholars, Ibn Barrajan was known to his biographers as an expert of Qur’ānic variants. He frequently displays his command of the subject in the *Tanbīh*, and occasionally in the *Īdāh*. But his discussions of *qirā’āt* are neither exhaustive nor systematic, and add very little substance to his exegetical teachings. Many important variant readings of verses are touched upon briefly or skipped entirely, such as the famed and contended readings of Q. 4:1.¹¹¹ Such discussions are selective and showcased by way of scholarly convention, thus vesting his work with interpretive authority and satisfying the conventional expectations of his readers.

What is interesting and typically Barrajanian is that he objects to the canonization of Mujāhid’s “seven” readings at the cost of relegating the so-called “rare readings” (*shawādh*) to marginal status. He notes that the first generation of Muslims did not hold the classical seven readings to be superior to the rest. He holds that the professed “rare readings,” which were also transmitted by pious erudites with chains that go back to the Prophet, were unjustifiably marginalized in the third/ninth century.¹¹² Ibn Barrajan therefore entertains rare variant readings (*qirā’āt shādh*) and sometimes, as an exegetical exercise, attempts alternative interpretations of verses by way of these *shawādh*. Ibn Barrajan also occasionally defies

¹¹¹ *Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women; and fear God by whom you demand one of another, and the wombs; surely God ever watches over you* (Q. 4:1).

¹¹² *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, I, pp. 104–105.

the canon by reranking readings in terms of authoritativeness. This type of appraisal would have been deemed problematic by scholars who accepted canonized variants as being equally legitimate and therefore unrankable.¹¹³

Another noteworthy aspect of Ibn Barraĵān's treatment of the *qirā'āt* is his particular understanding of the ḥadīth which states that "God revealed the Qur'ān in seven *ahruf*" (*'alā sab'at ahruf*).¹¹⁴ These *ahruf* are interpreted by medieval Sunnī authorities as seven letters, seven Arab tribal dialects, seven resonances of meaning, or the "seven readings" collected by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/935). Some even interpret the *ahruf* to mean the seven "facets" of the Qur'ān, namely command, prohibition, promise, threat, argumentation, moral stories, and instructive examples. Ibn Barraĵān, for his part, favors an understanding of the "seven *ahruf*" not literally, but as an indefinite number of ways in which the Qur'ān can be pronounced. Each Muslim, in other words, is given license to recite the Qur'ān according to his training and capabilities. Non-Arabs (*'ajam*), and presumably Andalusī Muwallads and Berbers who are unable to pronounce the Arabic alphabet "correctly," or who even replace one letter with another, are not punished in the Hereafter for their mistakes. The Qur'ān, he reasons, was divinely facilitated to accommodate Arabs and non-Arabs alike. The number "seven" in the report therefore simply denotes "an open door to multiple possibilities" (*bāb faṭḥ al-kathra*).¹¹⁵

The Use of Weak Ḥadīths to Explain the Qur'ān

After the Qur'ān, the most important and oft-cited source in Ibn Barraĵān's tafsīrs are the third–fifth-/ninth–eleventh-century Sunnī Ḥadīth collections. Ibn Barraĵān frequently comments upon ḥadīths, and incorporates ḥadīth variants to enrich his analysis. His reports are all cited from memory, and include the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Sunan* collections, and are almost never preceded by cumbersome chains of transmission (*isnād*).¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Hosni, *Manhaj*, pp. 185–190. ¹¹⁴ Bukhārī, #2419, #7550; Muslim, #818.

¹¹⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 107–109. I have not come across a discussion in Ibn Barraĵān's works where he specifies the exact number (7, 10, or 14) of variant readings that he accepts. He presumably held all readings to be valid. Ibn Barraĵān's understanding of the *ahruf* possibly betrays a nativist, pro-Berber agenda in al-Andalus and aligns with his estrangement from the mainstream Mālikī discourse of his day.

¹¹⁶ They comprise, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (d. 257/870), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (d. 261/875), *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān* (d. 354/965), *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma* (d. 311/923), *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*

Nearly every interpretation of an āya is supported by one or two pertinent aḥādīth, be they weak or strong. More than one thousand ḥadīths are cited in the *Tanbīh*, and close to the same number in the *Īdāb*. These reports usually confirm rather than inform his Qur'ānic interpretations. They are cited most often for admonitory purposes, as scriptural underpinnings for his mystical doctrines, or to unpack and clarify a comprehensive Qur'ānic verse (*bayān mujmal*).

Unlike most Sunnī exegetes, Ibn Barrajan makes little use of exegetical reports (*akhbār*) ascribed to the Companions and Successors in his tafsīr. When he does, his reliance on these reports is not disclosed. He does, however, employ a select number of divine sayings (sing. *ḥadīth qudsī*) to supplement his discussions of God's proximity to man. Although he acknowledges the importance of causal circumstances of revelation in understanding the Qur'ān, *asbāb al-nuzūl* rarely figure into his commentary, and when they do they are secondary to his interpretations of the Qur'ān.¹¹⁷

Modern Muslim scholars have reproached Ibn Barrajan for not specifying the sources and authenticity of his aḥādīth, and for liberally incorporating not only sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), but also weak (*ḍa'īf*) and fabricated (*mawḍū'*) reports.¹¹⁸ This is to forget that most Andalusī exegetes, including Ibn 'Aṭīyya (d. 541/1146), Ibn Juzay (d. 758/1357), and Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344), cited aḥādīth freely without citing their sources. They also narrated aḥādīth in a nonverbatim fashion (*riwāya bi-l-ma'nā*), a common practice to which Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī¹¹⁹ and later Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Arabī objected.¹²⁰ Ibn Barrajan's attitude toward Ḥadīth parallels Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's closely. Makkī, who also wrote from memory, frequently used weak aḥādīth in his *Qūt al-qulūb* and was criticized (like Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā'*) for this practice. He also maintained that it is permissible for qualified scholars to narrate prophetic sayings nonliterally, and insisted that many Companions and early authorities transmitted the meaning of the Prophet's sayings without relating his

(d. 276/889), *Sunan al-Bayhaqī* (d. 458/1066), *Sunan al-Dārimī* (d. 255/869), *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (d. 279/892), *Sunan Ibn Māja* (d. 273/887), *Musnad Abī Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī* (d. 307/919), *Musnad Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal* (d. 241/855), *Muṣannaf 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī* (d. 211/826), *Mustadrak al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī* (d. 405/1014), and *Muwatta' al-Imām Mālik* (d. 179/795).

¹¹⁷ See Hosni, *Manhaj*, p. 147. ¹¹⁸ For examples, see Hosni, *Manhaj*, pp. 54–55.

¹¹⁹ Rūmī, *Manhaj al-madrasa al-Andalusiyya fī al-tafsīr*, p. 19.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of Ibn 'Arabī's emphasis on the literal wording of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, see Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, Chapter I.

exact words. Furthermore, Makkī by his own admission shared the Ḥanbalī preference for weak Ḥadīth over scholarly opinions (*ra'y*).¹²¹

In similar vein, Ibn Barraġān uses purportedly weak and fabricated Ḥadīth, and narrated prophetic sayings nonliterally. In line with earlier Ḥadīth scholars, Ibn Barraġān defends this practice, so long as his weak sayings are not marshaled for juridical purposes.¹²² When it comes to eschatology and metaphysics, it is truth, not historical accuracy of the chain (*isnād*) that counts for Ibn Barraġān – and truth is weighed against the Qur'ān not an *isnād*. At root, Ibn Barraġān maintained that it does not matter whether or not Muḥammad actually said it or not. What matters is whether a statement attributed to him is vested with authority and accepted as going back to him by virtue of its Qur'ānic validation. As a case in point, Ibn Barraġān reflects on verse Q 54:1 on the splitting of the moon. The ḥadīth about the Prophet splitting the moon in Mecca is transmitted by a single narrator (*ḥadīth aḥād*) and is deemed by Ḥadīth authorities to be weak. Yet the event is confirmed by the Qur'ān in the verse *The Hour has drawn nigh and the moon is split* (Q. 54:1). Ibn Barraġān thus argues that the value of a prophetic saying, regardless of its authenticity, should be assessed primarily in light of its Qur'ānic foundation (*aṣl*). When weak prophetic sayings agree in substance with the Qur'ānic message, their use is permissible:

In the transmission of the report of the splitting of the moon by a single narrator, despite its prominence in the Qur'ānic text, there is a divine wisdom: that single-strand narrations may behoove inner knowledge (*ilm bāṭin*), and that it is not impossible for truth to come by way of a ḥadīth or a sunna whose transmission is weak. Whenever one is confronted by a weak ḥadīth or report, one must first assess whether its meaning is confirmed by the Qur'ān. One should refrain from saying “this did not come down by a sound transmission nor did a trusted authority (*thiqa*) transmit it.” Instead one should assess the report according to the method undertaken in [my] *K. al-Irshād*. In similar vein, a ḥadīth could come down through a sound chain of transmission that links back to one or many trusted authorities, but upon closer inspection [one finds that] it has no [Qur'ānic] foundation (*aṣl*). That is why scholars say that, aside from those which are mass-transmitted (*tawātur*), aḥādīth do not behoove knowledge even though they may be legally binding (*lā yūjib al-ilm wa-in awjaba al-amal*).¹²³

¹²¹ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, I, pp. 356–358. For reception of Makkī's work and his use of weak Ḥadīth, see Yazaki, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 126–144.

¹²² Brown, “Even If It's Not True.” ¹²³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 228.

Ibn Barraĵān's attitude toward Ḥadīth also comes across in a passage of the *Īdāb* where he quotes a lengthy weak Ḥadīth description of the "one-hundred million" (*mi'at alf alf*) different paradisaal delights that await those who recite sūra 36 (Yā-Sin) in this world. Preempting objections to his usage of a weak Ḥadīth, which was probably drawn from a Sufi source such as *Hilyat al-awliyā'* or *Qūt al-qulūb*, Ibn Barraĵān states:

Proof (*dalīl*) for this [ḥadīth] is not to be sought after, nor should Ḥadīth narrators look for a reliable chain of transmission (*sanad*) as one would normally for legal commands, prohibitions, and penalties. For its [Qur'ānic] foundations (*uṣūl*) confirm its veracity, and the totality of revelation substantiates its necessarily existent truth . . . for the Prophet said: "convey on my behalf even if it be a single verse, and feel free to transmit from the People of Isrā'īl." This he said with respect to their states in this world, so what about an abode whose measure is unfathomable?¹²⁴

It is noteworthy that Ibn Barraĵān does not dismiss any soundly transmitted ḥadīth on Qur'ānic grounds. For he is not interested in narrowing his repository of citable ḥadīth, nor in invalidating any ḥadīth. Instead, he marshals the Qur'ān with a view to legitimizing the authoritative scriptural sources that he can employ in his works. When a strong ḥadīth contradicts the Qur'ān, he simply resorts to symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*). His epistemological principle of Qur'ānic hegemony, in the end, is an appeal to Qur'ānic authenticity and a license to broaden the body of citable works within the fold of Qur'ānic commentary.

¹²⁴ *Īdāb*, ¶729–730.

A Muslim Scholar of the Bible

Biblical Proof-Texts for Qur'ānic Teachings in the Exegetical Works of Ibn Barrajān

INTRODUCTION

In 382 CE, Pope Damasus I commissioned the acclaimed Latin Christian priest Jerome (d. 420) to translate the Bible into Latin. Jerome's translation was preceded by a number of inconsistent and often unreliable Latin versions that had been in circulation in Africa and Europe since the second century CE. These older Latin translations were undertaken by a variety of known and unknown authors, and they varied in their degrees of quality. Moreover, the Old Testament books of these early Latin texts were rendered into Latin via the Greek Septuagint, not directly from the Hebrew. Jerome's first task was to revise the translations of the four Gospels on the basis of the most reliable Greek textual sources at his disposal. Then, from 390 to 405 CE, he undertook a new translation of the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Bible directly from the Hebrew Tanakh.¹ Jerome's masterful translation steadily gained recognition in the provinces of the Roman Catholic Church and was soon adopted as *the* definitive Latin translation of the Bible, superseding the older Latin versions. By the thirteenth century CE, Jerome's translation came to be known simply as the *versio vulgata*, or the "commonly used version."

Jerome's translation was widely available among the indigenous Arabic-speaking Christians of al-Andalus, known as the Mozarabs (from *musta'rabūn*, meaning "Arabicized"). As far as we can ascertain, Latin continued to be the primary liturgical language of the Mozarabic

¹ Jerome was heavily informed by several other sources, including Greek exegetical material and the Hexapla, a columnar comparison of the variant readings of the Old Testament carried out by Origen 150 years before Jerome.

church, despite the fact that Mozarabs were thoroughly Arabicized by the fifth/eleventh century. Since the Latin Vulgate was not readily accessible to the average Mozarab, it is safe to assume that passages from the Bible, and in particular the Gospels, Pauline Epistles, and the Psalms, were being read out before Mozarab congregations in Arabic no later than the fifth/eleventh century.²

The emergence of local Andalusī Arabic translations of the Bible had already begun by the late third/ninth century, and by the fourth/tenth century various segments of the Arabic Bible were probably available to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of al-Andalus.³ In these early stages, the translations from Latin into Arabic seem to have included lectionaries of translations for liturgical purposes. It is apparently on the basis of Jerome's *Vulgata* that the brilliant third-/ninth-century Andalusī scholar Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī (d. 276/889) rendered the Psalms into Arabic *rajaz* verse. This task, which he completed in 275/889, is often viewed as the watershed moment for the production of Christian-Arabic Mozarab literature in al-Andalus.⁴ Nonetheless, al-Qūṭī's popular versified translation appears to have been preceded by earlier local renderings that we have no knowledge of, since the author expresses his disapproval of the hyperliteralism of a previous, and currently unknown, prose rendition of the Psalms in his introduction. Taking his lead from Ḥafṣ, Ishāq b. Balashk al-Qurtubī translated the Gospels on the basis of *Biblia Hispana* or the pre-Jerome *Vetus Latina* in the mid fourth/tenth century. Ibn Balashk's translation in turn was corrected against the *Vulgata*, giving rise to a distinct textual tradition. In addition to Ibn Balashk and its corrected renditions, another independent translation seems to have existed, the dating and authorship of which are unknown, but which was based on the Hebrew-to-Latin translation of Heironym known as the *Biblia Vulgata (Iuxta Hebraicam Veritatem)*. This anonymous translation had a smaller circulation in al-Andalus, although sometimes it was compared against passages of Ibn Balashk's Arabic version for purposes of revision and correction.⁵

Regrettably, our knowledge of the Andalusī Arabic Bible(s) is limited since the full translations of these works have not survived. The paucity of

² van Koningsveld, "Christian-Arabic manuscripts," p. 426; Kassis, "Arabic-speaking Christians."

³ Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, p. 199.

⁴ van Koningsveld, "La literatura cristiano-árabe," p. 698.

⁵ van Koningsveld, "Christian-Arabic manuscripts," pp. 425–426.

the surviving Mozarab literary sources is in contrast to the abundance of materials we have from the Christians of the Mashriq, and this disproportion mirrors the historical ups and downs of the Mozarab Christian community itself. This dearth of surviving Mozarab literature is not historically surprising given that the community as a whole was scattered, on account of either migrations to the northern Christian territories beginning in the fifth/eleventh century or forced deportation to North Africa in the sixth/twelfth century. Nor did it help that Catholic bishops of the northern kingdoms of Iberia deplored the Toledan Church for its Mozarabic liturgy and doctrine and for “submitting” to Muslim rule. In fact, the very term “Mozarab” (*musta‘rab*)⁶ is an anachronistic label of opprobrium that harks back to fifth-/eleventh-century Christian texts and was employed pejoratively against Toledan Christians.⁷ Ironically, therefore, the extinct Christian-Arabic tradition of al-Andalus in general, and the Arabic Biblical texts in particular, is more likely to be excavated from indirect medieval Muslim and Jewish sources than from original Christian texts.

One such Muslim source that gives us a window into the Mozarab Arabic Biblical tradition is the written corpus of Ibn Barrajan. In sharp contrast to the general tendency of post-fourth-/tenth-century Qur’anic exegetes in both the East and West (excepting in the modern period), the Sevillian master seems to be the first Qur’anic exegete to seriously engage with the Bible nonpolemically and through actual extended quotations. He freely incorporated Biblical materials into his works in order to explain the Qur’an and fill gaps in his understanding of Biblical figures and narratives. That is, Ibn Barrajan probed into the Bible to further his understanding of the divine Word, whereas his medieval predecessors’ Biblical engagement was generally polemical and characterized by a desire to (i) claim that the Jews and Christians had corrupted their scriptures either textually or by way of errant interpretation; (ii) find proof of Muhammad’s prophecy in the Bible; and/or (iii) correct Biblical narratives that did not align with Qur’anic ones.⁸ When pooled together, the Biblical passages in Ibn Barrajan’s extant works occupy approximately twenty full pages in modern print and are almost certainly taken from a Latin-to-Arabic Andalusī translation. Ibn Barrajan’s works are

⁶ Epalza, “Mozarabs,” pp. 149–151. ⁷ Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus*, p. 8.

⁸ See Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, p. 176. For a list of third/ninth to fourth/tenth century authors involved in adducing Biblical passages that foretell the advent of Muhammad, see Schmidke, “The Muslim reception of Biblical materials.”

therefore of interest to scholars of both Qur'ānic exegesis and Arabic Biblical literature.⁹

This chapter assesses Ibn Barraġān's mode of engagement with the Bible in his extant body of writings. In it I demonstrate the different interpretive strategies marshaled by Ibn Barraġān to resolve perceived incongruities between narratives of the Qur'ān and the Bible. I argue that the Bible enjoys the same degree of interpretive authority in his works as the Ḥadīth and that there are instances where the Bible is not only allowed to complement but also challenge his understanding of the Qur'ān. Ibn Barraġān's openness to the Bible rests on his hermeneutical principle of "Qur'ānic hegemony"; that is to say, his reasoning that the Qur'ān, being God's final and untampered divine revelation, enjoys epistemological supremacy and can serve as the ultimate litmus test by which all other scriptures, including the Bible, are to be judged and mined for wisdom. The Qur'ān proclaims itself to be the conclusive revealed book of God which confirms, clarifies, safeguards, and, according to many, abrogates previous revelations. Taking these teachings to heart, Ibn Barraġān substantiates his approach to Biblical scholarship by means of the Qur'ān. Pushing the premises of this principle as far as they will go, he argues that Biblical materials and aḥādīth are to be assessed solely on the basis of their alignment with the Qur'ān. I propose that Ibn Barraġān's far-reaching hermeneutical principle of Qur'ānic hegemony may have been in part inspired by the scripturalist tendencies that are articulated in the writings of the Zāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064).

IBN BARRAJĀN AND THE ARABIC BIBLE

Ibn Barraġān is likely the earliest Qur'ān exegete in Islamic history to employ the Bible extensively and for nonpolemical purposes in his quest to understand the divine Word. His interest in the Bible can be detected already in his *Sharḥ*. The influence of the Bible on his thought becomes

⁹ For an extensive appendix and translation of the Latin-to-Arabic Biblical passages cited in Ibn Barraġān's works, see Casewit, "A Muslim scholar of the Bible." The compilation of scattered and heretofore unexamined Arabic Biblical materials demonstrates the parallels and occasional divergences between Ibn Barraġān's Bible and its original Latin Vulgate equivalents, which confirm a Latin basis for the Arabic beyond reasonable doubt. It is likely that Ibn Barraġān worked with an annotated or an amended version of Ibn Balashk's translation that was corrected by a scholar against the Latin *Vulgata* sometime between the late fourth-/tenth- and the early sixth/twelfth century. This is confirmed by the affinity between Ibn Barraġān's Biblical citations and München Staatsbibliothek MS Ar. 234 and 238. See McCoy, "Sacra Scriptura in Islamic Contexts," Chapter 2.

progressively more pronounced in the *Tanbih*, and even more so in the *Idāb*.

Ibn Barrajan was not the only exception to the medieval tendency to engage the Bible narrowly and polemically. The fourth-/tenth-century mysticophilosophical treatises of the Brethren often appeal to Biblical materials.¹⁰ During the same period, the Ismā'īlī philosopher Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020) made use of quotations from Jewish-Christian sources in his works.¹¹ Since Ibn Barrajan was influenced by certain cosmological doctrines found in the Brethren's *Rasā'il* as well as Ismā'īlī sources, he may have taken an interest in the Bible as proof-text for mystical teachings after reading these works.

The only other Qur'ān exegete of the sixth/twelfth century to employ the Bible as an interpretive source of tafsīr was the near-contemporaneous Eastern Ṣūfī author, Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī (d. ca. 593/1197), who cited passages from the Hebrew Bible in Arabic script. These Biblical citations seem to have been included in order to corroborate his interpretations of Qur'ānic passages such as Q. 42:11, Q. 2:30, and Q. 24:35.¹² But Ibn Barrajan goes much further than Daylamī, both hermeneutically and quantitatively. Three centuries later the Mamlūk scholar of Egypt al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480) extensively employed Jewish and Christian scriptures for similar exegetical purposes.¹³ But while al-Biqā'ī's sympathies with the Bible aroused controversy in Mamlūk Egypt, it is remarkable that Ibn Barrajan, who wrote during the height of the Crusades and the Reconquista, was not criticized by his scholarly peers for his inquiries into the Bible. This may be explained by the fact

¹⁰ Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 53–77.

¹¹ Sezgin, *Geschichte*, I, pp. 580–582; Kraus, “Hebräische und syrische Zitate.”

¹² See Böwering, “The writings of Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī”; “The Light Verse,” esp. pp. 140–142; art. *El*, “Daylamī.”

¹³ Walid Saleh has written several studies on al-Biqā'ī. See “Exquisite in its style”; “A fifteenth-century Muslim Hebraist”; and Saleh and Casey, “An Islamic Diatessaron.” It is worth noting that al-Biqā'ī, who stood at the forefront of a scholarly dispute over the permissibility of using the Bible, authored a treatise entitled *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma fī bukm al-naql min al-kutub al-qadīma* (ed. Walid Saleh) where he defends his use of the Bible in interpreting the Qur'ān. In *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma* he lists a large number of Muslim authorities who cited Biblical material. Although Ibn Barrajan is quoted over fifty times in Biqā'ī's Qur'ān commentary, *Nazm al-durar*, he does not receive an entry in *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma*. This omission is presumably because al-Biqā'ī took an interest in Ibn Barrajan's writings relatively late in his career. He wrote the *Nazm* over the course of a twenty-two-year period, and his first reference to Ibn Barrajan is in connection with Sura 30 (al-Rūm). Al-Biqā'ī's interest in Ibn Barrajan's Qur'ān commentaries was presumably sparked by his reading of the Jerusalem prediction. He may have already penned *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma* and was unaware of Ibn Barrajan's Biblical citations at the time.

that he couched his works so thoroughly in the Qur'ān. Moreover, the late Almoravid rulers and their state-sponsored judges (*qāḍīs*) felt threatened not by Muslim Biblical studies but by the increasingly politicized epistemological claims of mysticism, which posed a threat to the established political and religious structures of authority of the day. Curiously, the only hint of discomfort from a Muslim with Ibn Barraġān's Biblical engagement appears on the cover of one manuscript of the *Sharḥ*, in which an anonymous scribe accuses him of being *masīḥī* ("a Christian").¹⁴ This accusation is certainly false, but it does carry perhaps a suggestion of truth, for Ibn Barraġān's third most important source of inspiration in his quest to understand the divine Word is none other than the Bible – the first and second being respectively Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Ibn Barraġān freely incorporates Arabic Biblical material alongside Ḥadīth to present his interpretations of Qur'ānic verses, which differ markedly from most mainline Sunnī exegetical interpretations.

IBN BARRAJĀN'S ACCESS TO THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Ibn Barraġān quotes extensively from the Hebrew Bible, especially Genesis (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 15, 18, 19, 22), and paraphrases a handful of passages from Exodus.¹⁵ Interestingly, the Torah (and especially Genesis) is cited more frequently than any other book of the Bible. In contrast to the Brethren who stress the Gospels in their *Rasā'il*, Ibn Barraġān never tires of reminding his reader that the Torah enjoys a special status among revealed scriptures mentioned in the Qur'ān. He notes that the Torah is Qur'ānically described as a discernment or 'differentiation' (*tafṣīl*) of all things: *And We wrote for him [Moses] on the Tablets of everything an admonition, and a differentiation of all things* (Q. 7:145). Ibn Barraġān takes this verse to mean that the Torah not only issues from God's all-embracing knowledge, but also that it fleshes out or unpacks God's

¹⁴ The manuscript in question is in Istanbul, Çarullah 1023 (235ff.; copied in 795/1392), folio 17. Cf. Ahmad Shafiq's introduction to al-Mazaydī's edition of Ibn Barraġān's *Sharḥ*, I, p. 19, n. 1.

¹⁵ Ibn Barraġān probably did not possess a full Arabic translation of Exodus, but he did have some familiarity with this Biblical book. In his interpretation of Q. 7:134–135, where Moses's followers turn to him in supplication after suffering from locusts, lice, and frogs, Ibn Barraġān cites what appears to be passages from Exodus 9:13–35 on the plague of hail. He attributes the plague of hail to the rod of Aaron instead of the hands of Moses stretched forth to the heavens. He quotes these passages from memory. Additionally, he cites Exodus 4:1–9 to interpret the word *rijz* in Q. 7:134 (*Tanbīh*, ed. Mazaydī, II, pp. 356–357).

undifferentiated (*mujmal*) knowledge as inscribed upon the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūẓ*).¹⁶ The Torah thus contains all knowledge of past, present, and future, and like the Qur'ān it also contains predictions about what is to come. The Torah, in other words, is an important source of mystical inspiration and corresponds precisely to the Supreme Qur'ān, the "core" of the revelation discussed in Chapter 6.¹⁷

It is very likely that Ibn Barraĵān came across commentaries upon the Torah in Arabic, specifically commentaries on Genesis and Exodus, since he claims to have consulted "commentaries upon some of the previously revealed Books" in his discussion of Exodus (3:21–22).¹⁸ The extent to which these works were available in Arabic at the time does remain an open question. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that Ibn Barraĵān had access to written or oral Eastern commentaries authored by Jewish exegetes, like that of Sa'adiya Gaon (d. 331/942),¹⁹ or the 'Irāqī Christian commentator Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 435/1043),²⁰ or even local Biblical commentaries such as those produced by the contemporary, though younger, Jewish scholar Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. ca. 563/1167).

Ibn Barraĵān demonstrates a broad, albeit vague, familiarity with the Books of Prophets (*kutub al-nubuwwāt*), which he clearly distinguishes from the Torah. For instance, he points out that the *kutub al-nubuwwāt* frequently employ the metaphor of a "cup" to denote good or evil.²¹ What is hermeneutically significant is that Ibn Barraĵān accords the status of divine revelation (*wahy*) to the *kutub al-nubuwwāt*, which are not explicitly listed as revelatory in the Qur'ān. Furthermore, Ibn Barraĵān cites the

¹⁶ *Īdāb*, ¶40. ¹⁷ *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 283.

¹⁸ The passage concerns the women of Israel who borrowed jewels of silver, gold, and raiment from their neighbors. God says to Moses in Exodus 3:21–22: *And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put [them] upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.* Ibn Barraĵān notes how this is confirmed by the Qur'ānic verse, *we were loaded with fardels, even the ornaments of the people, and we cast them* (Q. 20:87). In this discussion, Ibn Barraĵān again cites from memory as he interlaces Qur'ānic verses with passages from Exodus. See *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, II, pp. 366–367.

¹⁹ For a recension based on the Jewish translation of Sa'adiya Ga'on, see Kahle, *Bibelübersetzungen*. For Sa'adiya's commentary, see de Lagarde, *Materialien*; Eng. trans. by Linetsky, *Rabbi Saadiyah Gaon's Commentary*. See also Steiner, *Biblical Translation*.

²⁰ On Ibn al-Ṭayyib, see Graf, *Geschichte*, II, pp. 160–177; Samir, "La place d'Ibn al-Ṭayyib"; Faultless, "Ibn al-Ṭayyib"; Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Commentaire*; Vollandt, "Christian-Arabic Translations."

²¹ Cf. Ezekiel 23:33, Zechariah 12:2, Revelation 14:10, 1 Corinthians 10:21.

kutub al-nubuwwāt to deepen his knowledge of the Qur'ān and, in at least one instance, to correct a conventional interpretation accorded to Q. 2:243 by Sunnī exegetes.²² In the following passage, Ibn Barraġān quotes Ezekiel 1:10 from memory, and possibly through a secondary Islamic source, to expound upon the angelic carriers of the divine throne:²³

The Qur'ān commentators relate that according to the earliest books, the throne has four angels – peace be upon them – and they also mention that one of them resembles a human, the second an eagle, the third an ox, and the fourth a lion. This is what has been related in the prophecies of some of the prophets – peace be upon them all – describing their night journeys. Likewise, it has been related that the carriers of the mighty throne are Mikā'il, Isrāfīl, and two others whose names have slipped my mind.²⁴ And God knows best.

Before we turn to the New Testament, it is curious to note that Ibn Barraġān only occasionally cites *Isrā'iliyyāt* accounts to drive home a point in his tafsīr. These *Isrā'iliyyāt* sometimes include Ḥadīth literature in which Muḥammad relates anecdotes about Jewish prophets.²⁵ *Isrā'iliyyāt* did not seem to have attracted much of his attention and therefore occur with much less frequency than Biblical citations. However, Qur'ānically validated *Isrā'iliyyāt* enjoy more or less the same level of authority in his writings as Ḥadīth and Biblical material.

In terms of the New Testament, Ibn Barraġān quotes only from the Gospel of Matthew (Chapters 4, 11, 13, 20, and 24).²⁶ He does not evince any knowledge of the existence of Mark, Luke, and John (*al-anājil al-arba'*) and, similarly, there are no indications that he had access to an Arabic translation of the Diatessaron, such as Ibn al-Ṭayyib's so-called Arabic Gospel Harmony. He equates the Gospel (*injīl*) with Matthew and emphasizes that the Qur'ān acclaims it as a source of *guidance, light*, and

²² See his discussion of Ezekiel 37:1–10 in appendix in Casewit, “A Muslim scholar of the Bible.”

²³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 373. For a similar discussion, see *ibid.*, IV, pp. 369–370.

²⁴ 'Azrā'il and Jibrīl.

²⁵ For instance, one ḥadīth states that David was told by God to “Convey good news to sinners, and warn the truthful ones” for ignorant sinners are held to a lower standard than those who are endowed with knowledge of God and the afterlife. See *Sharḥ*, I, p. 307.

²⁶ The fact that Ibn Barraġān only possessed a translation of Matthew in Arabic is alluded to in the *Sharḥ* where he states: “It is repeatedly mentioned in the book that is said to be the Gospel: *Cast this wicked servant into the lower darkness; there shall be prolonged weeping and gnashing teeth*” (*Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 83). The only Gospel of the New Testament where this verse appears repeatedly is Matthew (8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30). In Luke it appears only once (13:28). Therefore Ibn Barraġān equates the *Injīl* with the Gospel of Matthew.

admonition (And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus son of Mary, confirming the Torah before him and We gave to him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, and confirming the Torah before it, as a guidance and an admonition unto the godfearing. Q. 5:46), terms which the Qur'ān ascribes to itself (Q. 10:57; Q. 4:174). The implication for Ibn Barraĵān is evident: that one must seek the channels of guidance, light, and admonition in both the Qur'ān and the Gospel.²⁷ However, it is noteworthy that Ibn Barraĵān does not accord the same interpretive status to the Gospels as he does to the Torah. While the Christian revelation is certainly a channel of guidance and light, it does not stand as a differentiation of the Preserved Tablet in the same way as the Qur'ānically affirmed status of the Torah. Aside from cosmological concerns, the fact that the Torah has more interpretive authority than the Gospel for Ibn Barraĵān also results from the fact that the Qur'ān includes many more references to Torah material than to Gospel material.

Three points are worth mentioning with regard to Ibn Barraĵān's interaction with the Gospel of Matthew. First, Ibn Barraĵān sometimes describes the Gospels not as the word of God, as understood in the Qur'ānic context, but as a collection of statements made by Jesus.²⁸ Second, he was well aware of the fact that certain aḥādīth had direct parallels in the Gospels. For instance, he quotes a famous ḥadīth qudsī, or statement attributed to God outside of the Qur'ān, from Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in which God addresses humanity: "Oh son of Adam, I was ill and you did not visit me; I was hungry and you did not feed me; I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink! The Son of Adam responds: Oh Lord, when were You hungry, so that you could be fed? Or naked, so that you can be clothed? God – may He be glorified – answers: had you done that for my servant, you would have done that for Me."²⁹ For Ibn Barraĵān, such parallels confirm the veracity and ultimately divine origin of both statements.

Second, the Christian theological doctrine of original sin, which developed in the Latin theology of Augustine during the late fourth- to early fifth century CE, left a faint trace in Ibn Barraĵān's thought and especially his narrative of the fall of man. For instance, in a report about Muḥammad's nocturnal ascent to heaven narrated by Bukhārī and others, the father of mankind, Adam, is described as sitting among his

²⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, III, pp. 283–284.

²⁸ See appendix in Casewit, "A Muslim scholar of the Bible," section on Eleventh Hour.

²⁹ Muslim, #2569; Ibn Ḥibbān, #269. *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, I, p. 135. See parallels in Mathew 25:35–45.

descendants in the heavens.³⁰ He looks at those who are to his right and smiles; and then looks at those who are to his left and cries. Ibn Barrajān explains that Adam cries on behalf of those who, like himself, were beguiled by Satan. Their being beguiled, he explains, “was in them [i.e., in their nature] like *an inheritance*” (*kānat fihim ka’l-wirātha*).³¹ Ibn Barrajān’s explanation of man’s “inherited sin,” which is passed down trans-generationally, appears to be influenced by the Christian theological doctrine of original sin, which he may have received orally.³² Further, original sin dovetails with Ibn Barrajān’s soteriological pessimism since, in his eyes, heaven and hell are determined by God in pre-eternity.³³

Of all Biblical books, the Psalms, which Ibn Barrajān usually equates with the *zabūr*, inform his writings the least. It is not certain whether he had access to an Arabic translation of the Psalms or other sapiential Biblical writings or if he ever read the Psalms in their entirety. In any case, the Psalms do not deal with narrative Biblical material and supply few proof-texts for his purposes. Ibn Barrajān describes in several of his passages how the Psalms contain the oft-repeated refrain ‘Oh David, hear what I say, and the truth I say, be such and such; Oh David, heard what I say, and the truth I say, do not do such and such.’ However, this recurring refrain can be found in early Muslim sources, and so there is no proof that Ibn Barrajān used the Arabic *rajaz* rendering of the Vulgate Psalms by Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī.³⁴ Our author’s understanding of the Psalms comes across in his statement:

God said [in the Qur’ān]: *For We have written in the Zabūr, after the Remembrance, ‘The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants’* (Q. 21:205). The *zabūr* could mean all [divinely revealed] books, or it could

³⁰ The term used in the *ḥadīth* is *aswida* for both those to Adam’s right and left. An *aswad* can mean a great serpent (see *Lisān al-‘arab*, *s-w-d*).

³¹ *Īdāb*, ¶381. See *ḥadīth* in Bukhārī, #349; Muslim, #163.

³² The scriptural foundations for this concept are seemingly to be found in Romans 5:12–21, 1 Corinthians 15:22, and Psalm 51:5.

³³ Ibn Qasī also had a conception of ‘original sin’ which he discusses in much more elaborate and explicit terms. See Ebstein, “Was Ibn Qasī a Sufi?”

³⁴ Ibn Barrajān states: *wa-ammā kitāb al-zabūr fa-yaqūl munazziluhu al-‘alī al-kabīr jalla jalāluhu: ‘yā Dāwud isma’ mimnī wa-l-ḥaqq aqūl kun kadhā wa-kadhā, yā Dāwud isma’ mimnī wa-l-ḥaqq aqūl lā taf’al kadhā wa-kadhā, wa-yukthir min ḥādhā fa-ashbah’* (*Īdāb*, ¶42). Parallels of this quotation are found in a statement attributed to the second-/eighth-century Successor (*tābi’ī*) and narrator of *Isrā’īliyyāt*, Wahb b. Munabbih, in Abū Nu’aym al-Aṣḥabānī’s *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, IV, pp. 45–46. Given that Ibn Barrajān’s knowledge of the contents of the *zabūr* appears to originate in reports of Wahb, I suspect that he did not possess a copy of Ḥafṣ’ *rajaz* rendition. See Urvoy, *Le psautier mozarabe*.

mean [the Psalms], which were sent down to David; and this [latter meaning] is more probable.³⁵

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL HEGEMONY OF THE QUR'ĀN

Ibn Barraĵān affirms that the Qur'ān is superior to previously revealed scriptures since it is the last of these scriptures and therefore both embraces and “guards” (*muhaymin*) all preceding revelations from error. He counsels his reader:

Whenever you desire to read the Torah, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham, Moses, Noah, Ṣāliḥ, or any prophet or messenger, then read the Qur'ān [instead]. For it is God's straight path to which all previously sent [messengers] were guided.³⁶

At the same time, Ibn Barraĵān applies the oft-recurring polysemic Qur'ānic word *al-kitāb* (e.g. Q. 5:48) to all revealed scriptures, including “the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, and all divinely revealed scriptures.”³⁷ Moreover, the utility of previous scriptures lies in the fact that they elucidate or “differentiate” (*tafṣīl*) God's all-embracing knowledge inscribed in the Preserved Tablet, which he occasionally refers to as “the Mother of the Book” (*umm al-kitāb*). In the following passage, Ibn Barraĵān promotes an engagement with non-Qur'ānic sources of revelation, including the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, and “all other scriptures” as a means of guidance and of deepening one's understanding of the contents of God's essential, undifferentiated knowledge inscribed upon the Mother of the Book:

God says: *And those [godfearing] who believe in what has been sent down to thee and what has been sent down before thee* (Q. 2:4). Our Qur'ān, and the previous Books including the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, and all other scriptures are together a guidance for those who have certainty, since they give report of God's good pleasure, and on the whole they alert to what was inscribed upon the Mother of the Book.³⁸

In other passages, Ibn Barraĵān clearly states that the Qur'ān is the most reliable revealed source. He argues that it serves as a litmus test against which the veracity of previous revelations and especially Biblical material can be gauged. Standing on firm Qur'ānic grounds, Ibn Barraĵān advocates the usage of all revealed books without exception, books which he describes as ‘scrolls ennobled by the exalted revelation’ (*al-ṣuḥuf al-*

³⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 42. ³⁶ *Īdāb*, ¶910.

³⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 165. For an analysis of the term *kitāb* in the Qur'ān, see Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self-Image*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 224. See also *Īdāb*, ¶18 and ¶31.

mukarrama bi-l-wahy al-'alī).³⁹ Notably, the tone of Ibn Barraġān's justification for the use of the Bible is not defensive but matter of fact. He affirms that any Biblical passage should be accepted as authentic if it is confirmed by the Qur'ān (*miṣdāquhu min al-qur'ān*). His selection of Biblical material is thus dictated primarily by the Qur'ān. That is, Ibn Barraġān assimilates Biblical materials into his writings as long as they (i) accord with his understanding of the Qur'ānic text, and (ii) complete and/or elaborate upon narratives that the Qur'ān does not fully develop. It is notable, for instance, that he does not pick material from the story of Joseph, which is already sufficiently detailed for his purposes in the Qur'ān. Similarly, Biblical accounts about Moses receive little attention. In contrast, stories of the Seven Days of Creation, Adam, and Abraham, which belong to the early chapters of Genesis and are less developed in the Qur'ān, play an important role in Ibn Barraġān's exegetical writings. His recurring discussions of the Eleventh Hour in Matthew enrich his discussions of Q. 57:28 and a ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection (*K. al-Ijāra*, see below).

Ibn Barraġān takes his principle of Qur'ānic hegemony a step further. He proclaims that the veracity of a ḥadīth need not necessarily be assessed by the soundness of its chain of transmission (*isnād*) but rather by the extent to which it accords with the Qur'ān. Thus, even though Ibn Barraġān rhetorically distances himself from the content of the Bible by introducing each passage with the cautionary formula "it is said in the book that is said to be the Gospel/Torah" (*fī al-kitāb alladhī yudhkaru annahu al-injīl/al-tawrah*), in effect both the Bible and the Ḥadīth enjoy equal weight in his writings since they are always weighed against and validated by the Qur'ān. In fact, Ibn Barraġān frequently refers to passages from Genesis and elsewhere as *ḥadīth* (lit. "speech") instead of *āya* ("verse/sign") or *wahy* ("revelation")⁴⁰ and, just as he inserts his own pious formulae following references to God and prophets in aḥādīth, he does the same when citing Biblical materials.

Ibn Barraġān's principle of Qur'ānic hegemony is indicative of a literalist, Zāhirī-like streak that runs through his writings, a streak that was strongly influenced by Ḥadīth. Given such influences, it is not coincidental that the biographer Ibn al-Zubayr describes him as a scholar who "bound his opinions to the outward [meanings] of the Book and the Sunna."⁴¹ Ibn Barraġān's notion that Biblical passages and aḥādīth, regardless of their

³⁹ *Īdāh*, ¶268. ⁴⁰ For example, *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 15.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, no. 45, p. 32.

historicity, should be accepted or rejected expressly on the basis of their concordance with the Qur'ān marks a radical departure of mainstream legal and theological thinking in Sunnī Islam. He endorses the idea that even a prophetic report that has a fabricated chain of transmission (*mawḍū'*) should be accepted as “true” if it is in alignment with the message of the Qur'ān.⁴² This powerful “principle of Qur'ānic hegemony” undermines the entire *isnād* approach to Sunnī Ḥadīth. Ibn Barraḡān's drastic scripturalism, his opposition to the Sunnī scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*), his occasional criticism of *taqlīd* and the *madhhabs*, and his undercutting of the Sunnī tradition of assessing aḥādīth on the basis of chains of transmission thus seems to betray a Zāhirī leaning in his thought.⁴³ After all, the writings of Ibn Ḥazm were accessible and widely known to the scholars of sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus, especially in Seville.⁴⁴ Ibn Barraḡān likely came into contact with the teachings of this school and may have taken inspiration from them to broaden, instead of restrict his engagement with the Bible.⁴⁵

THE SUPERSESSION OF PRE-ISLAMIC RELIGIONS (NASKH)

Ibn Barraḡān took an interest in the devotional practices of other religions and in their symbolic meanings. For instance, he notes how Roman

⁴² Ibn Barraḡān drew on the authority of an *isnād* when it suited his purposes, even though he usually stressed his principle of Qur'ānic hegemony and the corrective function of the Qur'ān in confirming weak aḥādīth. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Ibn Barraḡān only used his principle of Qur'ānic hegemony to confirm weakly transmitted aḥādīth and Biblical passages, and never to challenge the authenticity of a soundly transmitted prophetic report on the basis of a contradicting Qur'ānic verse. His principle of Qur'ānic hegemony, in other words, was only employed with a view to broadening the scope of authoritative scriptural sources which Ibn Barraḡān could make use of. See *Īdāb*, ¶729–730.

⁴³ There are significant differences between the two thinkers. *Contra* Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Barraḡān accepts weak aḥādīth and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*); submits that there is utility in the *madhhab* system while criticizing it; and endorses the idea that the Qur'ān contains inner meanings which are accessible to spiritually qualified scholars. Ibn Ḥazm rejected all of the above and considered Qur'ānic verses and strong aḥādīth to be equally authoritative. Sabra, “Ibn Ḥazm's Literalism,” pp. 99–109.

⁴⁴ Adang, “The spread of Zāhirism,” pp. 336–337.

⁴⁵ For instance, we know that the Zāhirī Ibn Yarbū' (d. 522/1128) studied the Ḥadīth collection of Bukhārī with Ibn Manẓūr, who was Ibn Barraḡān's Ḥadīth teacher; and that Ibn Barraḡān's Mālikī student 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbili transmitted Zāhirī works of Ibn Ḥazm. There are also connections to Ibn Barraḡān through Abū Bakr al-Mayūrqī's Zāhirī teacher Ibn Barrāl/Buriyāl, who was a student of Ibn Ḥazm and who came into contact with Ibn Barraḡān's associate Ibn al-'Arīf. See Adang, “The spread of Zāhirism,” p. 329.

Catholics in al-Andalus perform baptismal ceremonies in which the new initiate is immersed in holy water (*mā' al-ma'mūdiyya*) to provide protection against evil and wash away sins. He remarks that this rite is typically carried out in the presence of a group, who “touch the newly baptized Christian, thereby emulating all of the created existents which, by virtue of having been ‘touched’ by God, also possess an intrinsic love and yearning [for their Creator].”⁴⁶

But for all his openness to scriptures and his curious inquiry into the practices of other religions, it must be emphasized that Ibn Barraĵān was a firm believer in the dogma of “supersessionism” whereby Islam supersedes or abrogates Christianity, just as the latter is understood to have superseded Judaism. Salvation in the afterlife, therefore, is only possible within the framework of the Qur’ānic message brought by Muḥammad. All other religions are devoid of salvific efficacy.⁴⁷ Ibn Barraĵān plainly articulates this point of view in many of his writings and especially on his commentary on Q. 2:89, *When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them – and they aforesometimes prayed for victory over the unbelievers – when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the unbelievers.*⁴⁸

What follows is a translation of Ibn Barraĵān’s commentary on Q. 57:26–29 in which he outlines his pessimistic understanding of the history of Christianity and Judaism. The passage suggests that all the true followers of Christianity were killed off by their religiopolitical opponents and that the Torah and Gospels suffered severe distortions either by way of false interpretation (*taḥrīf al-ma'nā*) or textual forgery (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*) by the mainstream Christian community. He begins by stating that God revealed the Gospel (*injīl*) upon Jesus as a confirmation of the Torah,

⁴⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 270.

⁴⁷ For example, Ibn Barraĵān does not entertain the possibility of pubescent non-Muslims being saved after the coming of Islam, or of Hell ever subsiding for its denizens. He discusses the eschatological destiny of the children of unbelievers in the context of the following Qur’ānic verse: *Immortal youths will wait on them* (Q. 56:17). “These are the youths that died prior to attaining the age where one is obligated to observe the legal precepts of religion (*wujūb al-taklīf*); that is, they died in a state of innate disposition (*fiṭra*). I think, and God knows best, they are the children of the disbelievers, whom God entrusts to the service of the people of Paradise, just as they were their [child] slaves and servants in this world. As for the children of the believers, they will be with their parents. Their fate in Paradise, and God knows best, will be different. I think that they will grow up and take wives; for this is implicit in the verse [*And those who believed, and their seed followed them in belief, We shall join their seed with them*] (Q. 52:21), thereby completing the happiness of their parents” (*Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 422).

⁴⁸ E.g., *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 120–122, 267.

which was sent upon the Children of Israel. Some believed in him and affirmed the Torah and the Gospels, while others refused him:

Until the day a king appeared who changed the Torah and the Gospels, and he was followed by the Byzantines and Greeks. Then bishops were summoned from various parts of the earth, and they assigned three hundred and a few dozen bishops to compile a canon (*qānūn*) which would be imposed upon the people of their dominions; and so they did. Then the followers of Jesus were killed and torn to pieces, save a few who were protected by the regime of the day. These [survivors] continued to recite the Torah and the Gospels, and to worship God until the day they were succeeded by a generation who complained about them to their king, and they said: “None has insulted us with such a grave insult as these [Christians] because they recite in the Torah ‘Whosoever does not judge according to what God sent down, they are the disbelievers,’ and in the Gospels ‘Whosoever does not judge according to what God sent down, they are the unrighteous, and they are the digressers.’” And in our own book [the Qur’ān] we read *So judge between them according to what God has sent down, and do not follow their caprices, to forsake the truth that has come to thee* (Q. 5:48) and *Had they performed the Torah and the Gospel, and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have eaten both what was above them, and what was beneath their feet* (Q. 5:66). And we have previously discussed how the earlier scriptures can be deduced from the Qur’ān for those who seek to do so and are facilitated for the task.⁴⁹

INTERPRETIVE SOLUTIONS TO INTERSCRIPTURAL INCONGRUITIES

1 Historical Contextualization

Having outlined Ibn Barraġān’s general understanding of and approach to the Bible, let us look at the interpretive strategies that he uses to explain perceived scriptural incongruities between Qur’ānic narratives and Jewish and Christian sources. Contrary to expectations, Ibn Barraġān does not evoke the epistemological hegemony of the Qur’ān to resolve perceived tensions between the Qur’ān’s narratives and those of other scriptures. Instead, he resorts to what may be called “historical contextualization.” He insists that each divine revelation was tailored by God for the community that was destined to receive it, and that perceived incongruities often result from cultural, geographic, and even climatic particularities of the community that God is addressing. For instance, much like the philosopher Farābī (d. 339/950), he notes that religions are divinely tailored for the

⁴⁹ Ibid., V, pp. 305–306.

ultimate purpose of salvation. Thus, hellfire is often Qur'ānically described as hot, but in the New Testament it is said to be a place of freezing. This, he reasons, is because the Qur'ān was revealed to Arabs for whom coolness is a blessing and heat a curse; whereas the New Testament was destined for northern European inhabitants of cold temperatures for whom heat is a blessing and coolness a curse. Thus, he reasons, Hell comprises a freezing quarter designated for sinful Christians and a hot quarter for sinful Muslims. For Ibn Barrajān, as for later exegetes such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), God's tailoring His message to different peoples is a manifestation of divine mercy, since God wants His servants to fear Hell and therefore describes it in a way that would most terrorize listeners:

It is repeatedly mentioned in the book that is said to be the Gospel: *Cast this wicked servant into the lower darkness; there shall be prolonged weeping and gnashing teeth.*⁵⁰ This expression denotes freezing [temperatures], because the region where the people to whom Jesus was sent is predominantly cold. They suffered in this life from the cold of that region. They used to fight it with heat, and would protect themselves with [heat] from the harm [of cold]. This is in contrast to the state of the [Arab] people of the [desert] region where the Qur'ān descended.

There is far-reaching wisdom behind this twofold division of God's address [to humanity]: that [the message] may be a source of more awe in their souls, and that it may be a more stinging whip of fear for their hearts, and more effective in inspiring fear and grief in them, and that it may prompt their inner souls to flee from the imminent threat [of Hell]. And herein the excellence of His mercy becomes apparent through His address. For He created Hellfire from the whip of His mercy, in order to impel His servants to flee from it to His heaven.

Or it may also be that God knew that the [Arab] disbelievers who live in the hot region of the earth would dwell in the region of Hellfire that is predominantly hot; whereas the disbelievers of the cold regions would inhabit the region [of Hell] which is predominantly cold. All this in order for His books and messengers to be affirmed, and in order for the punishment of this life to connect to the punishment of the hereafter, and in order that *they be given the like thereof* (Q. 2:25), and God is the Knowing, the Wise.⁵¹

2 Allegorical Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)

The second tactic that Ibn Barrajān commonly resorts to in order to align Qur'ānic narratives with Biblical ones is allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*). For instance, he uses *ta'wīl* to explain the allegorical significance

⁵⁰ Mt 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Lk. 13:28. The Arabic translation here is: *iqdhifū bi-hādhā al-'abd al-sū' fi al-ḡulumāt al-suflā ḥaythu yaṭūl al-'awīl wa-qalaqat al-aḍrās.*

⁵¹ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyādī, II, p. 83.

of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which do not feature prominently in Islamic eschatological literature. In the Qur'ān, only one tree is featured and there is no explicit mention of the Tree of Life. Ibn Barrajān therefore puts forth three possible interpretations for the two trees. (i) These names were falsified by Jews (*tabrif*) and are not genuine revelations. This possibility is expressed but not emphasized by Ibn Barrajān. (ii) The trees were so named not by God but by Satan himself in order to lure Adam and Eve into disobeying God's command in Genesis 3:4–5. (iii) The trees can be allegorically interpreted (*ta'wīl*) to denote respectively the divine command (*amr*), which, when heeded, gives way to blissful immortality in the hereafter, and prohibition (*nahy*), which, when transgressed, results in punishment in the hereafter. There is only one tree, but it has two dimensions. The first is called the Tree of Life, symbolizing obedience to God's commands and is a door onto the hereafter. The second, called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, represents disobedience which is a door onto this world. Adam disobeyed: he ate from the latter, thereby transgressing God's prohibition, and for that he was expelled from Eden. Therefore, Ibn Barrajān reasons that had Adam eaten from the Tree of Life – that is, had he heeded God's command – instead of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he and his progeny would have lived eternally in Eden but would have never been raised to heavenly Paradise.⁵²

DOES THE BIBLE CHALLENGE THE QUR'ĀN?

A particularly fascinating aspect of Ibn Barrajān's exegetical use of Biblical material is that on the rare occasion in which a ḥadīth and Biblical material are aligned in meaning, they are accorded the same level of authority as a Qur'ānic verse. Furthermore, when a ḥadīth and a Biblical passage agree on a meaning that stands at odds with the Qur'ān, they may actually challenge the meaning of a particular Qur'ānic passage. In such a case, Ibn Barrajān affirms the veracity of each source – the Qur'ānic verse, the contradicting ḥadīth, and the Biblical passage – even if he is unable to entertain a solution to the apparent contradiction. His acceptance of such scriptural paradoxes is suggestive of the Ash'arī principle of “without how” (*bilā kayf*), which he evokes occasionally in his writings.

⁵² *Īdāb*, ¶382–383.

For instance, Ibn Barrajān notes that despite the Qur'ān's emphasis on God's transcendence (*tanziḥ*) vis-à-vis creation in verses such as *nothing is as His like* (Q. 42:11), there are certain Biblical passages, as well as aḥādīth, that state explicitly that the human being was created in the image of God. Although the Qur'ān is the most authoritative scriptural source for Ibn Barrajān, it cannot trump the combined authority of the Bible and *ḥadīth*. Ibn Barrajān therefore concedes that "both are true" without being able to provide an explanation:

Caveat: This previous [Biblical] passage mentions *Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness* (Gn. 1:26), and the Qur'ān confirms and protects the books that came before it, and God states truthfully: *nothing is as His like* (Q. 42:11), and He says *and none is equal to Him* (Q. 112:4). Yet, the Prophet said in an authentic report that 'God created Adam upon His image' and in another, 'upon the image of the All-Merciful', and both [the seemingly conflicting Qur'ānic verses and the ḥadīth are true, and God speaks the truth and guides to [His] way.⁵³

In sum, while both Ḥadīth and Biblical material are equally weighed against the Qur'ān, the interpretive weight accorded to each may vary according to context. Depending on which Biblical or ḥadīth passage is being cited, Ibn Barrajān may either accord the Bible as much weight as a complementary ḥadīth, or more weight than a ḥadīth, or the reverse.

TWO EXTREMES: IBN ḤAZM'S VERSUS IBN BARRAJĀN'S BIBLICAL ENGAGEMENT

The sharp-tongued and controversial Cordoban polymath Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) is known for his articulation of one of the most polemical onslaughts against the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. He famously deplored the Bible as being historically unreliable, internally contradictory, rationally absurd, and morally decadent. Ibn Ḥazm's Biblical sources remain unclear, though it is safe to assert that he relied mostly on Arabic translations that were at his disposal. It is almost certain that Ibn Ḥazm had more than one incomplete translation of the Torah at hand, since he occasionally compares his translations side by side. In all likelihood, his was not a complete translation of the Torah, but rather an abridgement that he compared against another written source or even against oral informants.⁵⁴ Modern scholars are in disagreement as to whether Ibn Ḥazm had access to Sa'adya Gaon's (d. 331/942) translation

⁵³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 15. ⁵⁴ Adang, *Muslim Writers*, p. 137.

of the Torah, a local Latin-to-Arabic rendering, or even a Karaite source.⁵⁵ Ibn Ḥazm definitely drew parts of his Biblical knowledge from earlier Muslim sources. One of these, which does not appear to have been used prominently by Ibn Barrajān, was Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *A lām al-nubuwwa* ("Signs of Prophethood"). Ibn Ḥazm lifts lengthy excerpts of Biblical foretellings of Muḥammad from the *A lām* in his *K. al-Uṣūl wa-l-furū'* ("The Book on Roots and Branches").⁵⁶

It is certain that Ibn Barrajān did not extract his knowledge of the Bible from Ibn Ḥazm's polemical work, *K. al-Faṣl fī al-milal wa-l-ārā' wa-l-niḥal* ("The Book of Discernment Between Religions, Doctrines, and Sects"). Rather he, like Ibn Ḥazm, probed into the Bible using translations that were at his disposal. As far as I can ascertain, the scattered Biblical quotations in Ibn Ḥazm's *Faṣl* only overlap loosely in seven instances with Ibn Barrajān's Biblical citations. Other than the *Faṣl*, I have not detected overlaps in Ibn Barrajān's writings with Ibn Ḥazm's earlier works.⁵⁷

Broadly speaking, Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Barrajān's hermeneutical engagement with the Bible is almost antipodal. Ibn Ḥazm's paramount concern is to show that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are replete with internal contradictions. Ibn Barrajān, on the other hand, had little interest in the supposed internal contradictions of the Bible and rather tried to incorporate Biblical material into his exegetical works to deepen his understanding of the Qur'ān. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that, for the former, the de facto assumption is that the Bible was tampered with (*mubaddal*) and falsified (*muḥarraf*) unless proven otherwise; for the latter, the Bible is an authentically and divinely preserved revelation unless there is strong evidence to prove its inauthenticity.⁵⁸ As we have seen, even in cases where the Bible is not in alignment with the Qur'ān, it is still possible to resolve the incongruities in Ibn Barrajān's eyes without

⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of the range of opinions regarding the authorship of Ibn Ḥazm's Bible, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, p. 136. Given the Andalusī context, a Christian Mozarab translation tradition seems likely to be the most important source for Ibn Ḥazm. Modern scholars have recently pointed out that Muslim authors were mostly exposed to earlier Arabic Christian renditions of the Bible in the East, and that on the whole Jewish ones including Sa'adya's (or pre-Sa'adian Karaite translations) did not play a significant role for any Muslim author. For translations of the Pentateuch, see Vollandt, "Christian-Arabic translations." For the Gospels, see Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*.

⁵⁶ Adang, "Some hitherto neglected material."

⁵⁷ For a comparison between Ibn Barrajān and Ibn Ḥazm's Biblical materials, see Casewit, "A Muslim Scholar of the Bible," pp. 35–36.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of Ibn Ḥazm's polemic against Judaism and Christianity, see Behloul, "The testimony of reason"; and Urvoy, "Le sens."

resorting to the idea that Jewish and Christian communities distorted the meaning or wording of their scriptures.

In addition to differences in outlook, it should be noted that Ibn Ḥazm had a minimal knowledge of Hebrew,⁵⁹ whereas Ibn Barraġān appears to have had none whatsoever. Moreover, Ibn Ḥazm had a broader knowledge of the Bible since he had access to the four Gospels, whereas Ibn Barraġān equates the *injīl* only with Matthew. Sometimes Ibn Barraġān states that he is quoting from memory and cites different possible alternatives for a given word in Matthew. There is little evidence, however, that Ibn Barraġān had multiple translations of the Bible at his disposal. His focus on Matthew is no surprise, since the first Gospel occupied a central position in the Mozarab community of al-Andalus from the beginning. Notably, the bulk of Ibn Ḥazm's quotations are from Matthew as well, although a few are from Mark, Luke, and John.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is not impossible that Ibn Barraġān had heard of the four Gospels but deliberately chose to omit anything about their existence in order to eschew polemics.

Two more conclusions can be drawn from a close comparison of the translations used in the works of Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Barraġān. First, although the translations are not identical, the stylistic flow of the Arabic in the version of Genesis quoted by both Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Barraġān is similar, and both renderings lack the idiosyncratic Hebraisms often found in medieval Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible. Unlike Jewish Arabic versions of the Bible in the Mashriq, such as the famous one by Sa'adiya Gaon, which was possibly available in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus,⁶¹ the Mozarab translations of the Bible into Arabic lack the distinctive features of translations influenced by Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic source languages. Second, some of the same stylistic observations can be made for passages in Matthew, whose phrases bear some similarity to Qur'ānic language. On the whole, however, there seem to be less discrepancies between Ibn Ḥazm's and Ibn Barraġān's Matthew translations than in their versions of Genesis.

There is no evidence to categorically exclude the possibility that Ibn Barraġān's sources came from the East. However, one may speculate based

⁵⁹ Adang, *Muslim Writers*, p. 134.

⁶⁰ Unlike Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Barraġān does not cite the chapters of the Bible that he quotes from. He only refers once to the opening of Genesis as the *sifr al-awwal* ("first book of the Torah") whereas Ibn Ḥazm uses the conventional term *bāb*. This may or may not indicate the different translations used by both Muslim authors.

⁶¹ Adang, *Muslim Writers*, p. 136.

on stylistic considerations that Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Barrajān drew from similar Latin-to-Arabic translation traditions in al-Andalus, which have yet to be fully mapped out. The few textual differences that can be detected in both authors' versions do not necessarily imply that they used the Bibles of two different translators. Just as cherished classical Arabic *qaṣīdas* (polythematic poems) were "living" texts that were modified by poets over time, Mozarab Arabic Biblical translations of the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel of Matthew evolved over the centuries as successive generations of Mozarab scholars tweaked and refined the Arabic recensions. Since the Arabic translation of the Vulgate never acquired the same canonical status as Jerome's Latin translation, Mozarab scholars would have felt free to insert their personal stylistic modifications. If this is the case, then passages of Ibn Ḥazm's Bible may represent earlier versions of the same Arabic Vulgate translation used by Ibn Barrajān one century later and/or represent the reintroduction of cherished pre-Jerome old Latin readings by North African and Andalusī copyists into the Mozarab Bible.

The Human Ascent

I'tibār, Cycles of Time, and Future Predictions

INTRODUCTION

God is absolute transcendence. Yet, He crosses the gulf that separates Him from creation by self-disclosing in human language and the natural world. God “crosses” on His own initiative, thereby laying down the bridge by which the believer can “cross” back to Him. The believer reciprocates God’s initiative by affirming his covenantal relationship with the divine and by contemplating and acting in accordance with God’s two central modes of self-disclosure: revelation and creation. Contemplation (*i'tibār*) is an ascensionary act of the intellect. It is at the core of religion and therefore the key to attaining absolute mystical certainty (*yaqīn*). Ibn Barraġān devoted most of his writings to discussing how this state can be achieved, and he described it as a result of “crossing from the visible to the unseen” (*al-‘ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghā‘ib*). He lived, breathed, taught, wrote, and died with a remarkable singularity of purpose that guided his mystical quest. In fact, one of the most striking features of his writings as a whole is how real, tangible, and self-evident the reality of the hereafter was for him. When he described the world of the unseen (*ghayb*), he spoke of it not as a distant world depicted in second-hand reports, but as an intimate reality. Ibn Barraġān was an eyewitness to the unseen.

While most biographical sources on Ibn Barraġān fail to convey the concrete certainty and faith-centeredness that radiates from his writings, one simple anecdotal vignette captures how he experienced the world around him by continuously pondering the convergence of scripture and God’s signs in the ordinary events of day-to-day life. The setting is simple.

Ibn Barraĵān and his student are conversing after a funeral at a local village cemetery in the backlands of Seville when suddenly, a mule comes into sight. Ibn Barraĵān's reaction to this seemingly ordinary encounter with a mule at a cemetery is casually recorded by the Andalusi exegete Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) in his book, "The Reminder of the States of the Dead and the Affairs of the Hereafter" (*K. al-Tadhkira fī aḥwāl al-mawtā wa-umūr al-ākhirā*). The report reads:

Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barraĵān related to me—and he was of the folk of knowledge and practice (*abl al-ʿilm wa-l-ʿamal*)—that they once buried a dead person in their village east of Seville. When the burial was complete, they sat to the side for a talk when suddenly a riding animal (*dābba*) that was grazing nearby rushed to the grave and placed its ear upon it as if to listen [to sounds within the grave]. Then it turned back, and once again came to the grave and placed its ear upon it as if to listen, then turned back once more. It kept doing so again and again. Abū al-Ḥakam [Ibn Barraĵān] then said: "At that moment I recalled the torments of the grave, and the statement of the Prophet: 'verily the [people of the graves] are tortured by a torturing that can be heard by beasts.' And only God knows what the state of that dead man was." He [Ibn Barraĵān] related this story while we were studying the Ḥadīth collection of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj.¹

This anecdote subtly captures Ibn Barraĵān's lived experience and illustrates his concept of *i'tibār*. First, Ibn Barraĵān posits that the visible realities of this world (*ʿālam al-shahāda*) are ontological continuations of the invisible realities of the next (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) as discussed in Chapter 5. In the case above, the riding animal putting its ear to the grave embodies the visible reality, whereas the punishment unfolding within the grave represents the world of the unseen. On the surface, these two modes of existence appear to be separated by a clear boundary that cannot be crossed. The funeral attendees are unaware of the fate of the departed one, even as the latter is cut off from the world of the living. Yet scores of aḥādīth affirm that the visible and invisible are interconnected, and by implication that both realms can be bridged. In this specific case, the Prophet stated that the dead can hear sounds of the footsteps of their loved

¹ Qurṭubī, *Tadhkira*, I, pp. 408–409. The anecdote is cited in the context of a short discussion on aḥādīth about the ability of beasts (*bahā'im*) to hear the torments of the dead in their graves. It was related possibly by one of our author's students, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq (n.d.). There are no tongue-in-cheek implications in this anecdote, which appears to have taken place during the second stage of Ibn Barraĵān's career when he moved into the rural outskirts of Seville. The anecdote confirms that Ibn Barraĵān continued to teach Ḥadīth even after moving from Seville. In his own writings, Ibn Barraĵān discusses aḥādīth on the ability of animals to hear the sounds of the torments of the grave (e.g., *Sharḥ*, II, p. 38).

ones departing the cemetery,² and that the torments of the dead are heard by mules and other animals.³ Taking these teachings at face value, Ibn Barraġān translated the distant horizons of the unseen into the most intimate reality. He integrated his arduous training in Ḥadīth with his mystical quest for the beyond through practice and constant meditation on scripture and the signs of God in nature.

Ibn Barraġān articulated his discourse on *i'tibār* in an intellectual paradigm defined by the Andalusī Mu'tabirūn tradition and in conversation with theological, Sufi, and philosophical precedents. In expounding upon the relationship between the visible and the unseen, or this world and the next, Ibn Barraġān attempted to strike a balance between two perceived theological extremes: transcendentalism and immanentism. The first, which was upheld especially by Ash'arī theologians and Mālikī literalists, maintained a clear distinction not only between God and creation (which Ibn Barraġān readily concedes to as discussed in Chapter 5) but also between this world and the next. Ibn Barraġān opposed this theological outlook because it imposed ironclad boundaries that limit a priori the experiential and epistemological claims of mysticism. At the same time, Ibn Barraġān was aware of the dangers of excessive theological immanentism. The so-called *bāṭiniyya*, or “esoterists,” embodied this danger. Ibn Barraġān employed the term *bāṭiniyya* as a catch-all reference to Ismā'īlīs who trump the divine law, as well as radical Sufis who speak of either union (*ittihād*) with God, divine indwelling, incarnation (*ḥulūl*), or physical, this-worldly access to paradise. While the *bāṭiniyya* subvert the fundamental teachings of religion in the name of its inner teachings, the transcendentalists reduce religion to an abstract high theology.

This chapter comprises three sections. Section I explores Ibn Barraġān's attempt to push the discourse on transcendence and immanence into a different direction by placing *i'tibār* at the center of mysticism and redefining the terms of the debate. In the process, he disassociated himself from not only the two theological extremes, but also certain controversial aspects of Ibn Masarra's legacy as well as philosophy as a whole. Section II examines the cosmological outlook that undergirds Ibn Barraġān's concept of *i'tibār*. His elaborate and scripture-bound vision of the cosmos (*kawn*), the descent of the divine command (*al-amr*), the cycles of

² A well-known ḥadīth, cited in several authoritative collections including Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1338; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #2870.

³ Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, #10459; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ta'riḫ al-Iṣbahān*, I, p. 239, #379.

determination (*dawā'ir al-taqdīr*) and the nature of time (*dawā'ir al-zamān*) will be analyzed here. Finally, Section III reflects on the culminating consequence of Ibn Barraġān's notion of *i'tibār*: the possibility of future predictions. It concludes with an examination of his famous posthumous prediction of the recapture of Jerusalem from the crusaders in the late sixth/twelfth century.

I I'TIBĀR: ACQUIRING EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

'Ibra or *i'tibār*⁴ are the most frequently used terms in Ibn Barraġān's oeuvre. The phrase "*al-'ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghā'ib*" (lit. "the crossing from the visible to the unseen"), which resurfaces almost as a leitmotif throughout his works, is not merely a religious obligation (*fard*),⁵ but the supreme goal and pinnacle of revealed religion.⁶ For all knowledge that is not connected to its root in the unseen is incomplete:

Every knowledge that is not connected to its *'ibra* is incomplete, and is a surface meaning (*zāhir min al-amr*) whose completion lies in connecting it to its *'ibra*.⁷

Recognizing God's names encompasses all knowledge; and knowing His unity is the supreme demonstration; and deriving understanding from His signs in existence is certitude, so seek it! And 'crossing from the visible to the unseen' is the entire affair.⁸

The term *i'tibār* derives from the triconsonantal root 'B-R (lit. to traverse, pass beyond, or cross). It is polyvalent and can be translated in multiple ways. In the Qur'ān, *'ibra* or *i'tibār* most commonly denote to "reflect," "take heed," or "draw counsel" from an instructive example or a moral lesson. In early tafsīr literature, *'ibra* is often associated with lessons that are to be drawn from God's signs in the world and His punishments of transgressors. Thus, the Qur'ān repeatedly enjoins the reader to *take heed* (*fa'tabirū oh you who have sight* (Q. 59:2). The term *'ibra* is also associated Qur'ānically with *ta'bīr*, which in sūra 12 (Yūsuf) denotes dream interpretation (*ta'bīr al-aḥlām*), the science of drawing correspondences between signs of the unseen world and this-worldly events. Finally, *ta'bīr* can denote "to be expressive of a particular idea." For instance, God's names are *mu'abbir*, that is, "expressive of" particular

⁴ *I'tibār* is the reflexive verbal noun of the eighth form of the triconsonantal root 'B-R ("to cross").

⁵ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, II, p. 115. ⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 83–85. ⁷ *Īdāḥ*, ¶693.

⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 293.

qualities of the divine Essence. Ibn Barraĵān makes full use of these various meanings in his writings, but emphasizes *‘ibra* as a conceptual leap from the outer form of things to their inner archetypal realities.

Ibn Barraĵān’s commentary on Q. 21:23, which recalls Ibn Masarra’s hermeneutics in his *Treatise on I’tibār* (see Chapter 1), illustrates our author’s basic concept of *i’tibār*. Early commentators understand the verse *And surely in the cattle there is a ‘ibra’ for you* (Q. 21:23) to mean that cattle provide instructive examples for contemplatives because, *We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, between filth and blood, pure milk, sweet to drinkers* (Q. 16:66). However, Ibn Barraĵān never tires of reminding his reader that the Islamic paradise is replete with plants and animals which are the archetypes of the vegetal and animal kingdoms. The earthly cattle in Q. 21:23 are a manifestation of, or entry point into the archetypal form of cattle and other existents that inhabit paradise.⁹ Moreover, various celestial realities of the hereafter can be apprehended by contemplating cattle. For instance, the rivers of milk that never spoil in paradise are foreshadowed by the milk produced by cattle. Similar correlative correspondences can be made for wine, water, air, and other elements.¹⁰

Ibn Barraĵān’s discourse on *i’tibār* may bring to mind discussions about the hereafter in the works of the third-/ninth-century Sufi renunciant of Baghdad, Muḥāsibī.¹¹ The latter’s popular treatise entitled “The Book of Imagining” (*K. al-tawabḥum*) seeks to stir intense feelings of longing for heaven and fear of hell by painting vivid descriptions of blissful and tormenting scenes of the afterlife. Notwithstanding the fact that *i’tibār* and *tawabḥum* are entirely different terms, it should be stressed that Muḥāsibī and Ibn Barraĵān espouse different conceptions of and approaches to the unseen. Muḥāsibī’s book, which Ibn Barraĵān was probably familiar with since it was in circulation in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus,¹² places the imagination at the center of the aspirant’s spiritual quest. Ibn Barraĵān, in contrast, does not display an overarching

⁹ Ibid., III, pp. 320–323. ¹⁰ *Īdāh*, ¶635.

¹¹ Muḥāsibī’s *K. al-Tawabḥum* was first published by Arberry in 1937 and has been republished numerous times since. For a description of this work and the history of its publication, see Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, pp. 72–73; and Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, pp. 94–97.

¹² Given the renown of *K. al-Tawabḥum* and Muḥāsibī’s popularity among Andalusī ascetics, it is likely that this treatise was read by them as well. For evidence of the book’s circulation in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus, see Ibn Khayr, *Fihrist*, p. 337, nr. 575 (*K. al-Tawabḥum wa-l-awbāl*).

preoccupation with the theme longing for paradise (*rajā'*) or fear of hell (*makhāfa*).¹³ Moreover, he is less explicit about the centrality of the imaginative faculty. Although the Qur'ān tends to identify the act of *i'tibār* with the faculty of sight (Q. 3:13; 24:44; 59:2), Ibn Barrajān usually describes it as an activity of the intellect (*'aql*) which can access mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*).¹⁴ This emphasis on the intellect reinforces his identification with Abraham, the “Master of the Mu'tabirūn” (*sayyid al-mu'tabirīn*), who arrived at knowledge of divine unity intellectually by contemplating the celestial bodies. Thus, in stressing the function of the intellect, Ibn Barrajān proclaims that just as Muḥammad had a direct experience of the next world during his nocturnal ascension (*mi'rāj*) to heaven, *i'tibār* is the “nocturnal flight” (*mi'rāj*) of the intellect to divine knowledge.¹⁵

Although Ibn Barrajān stresses the importance of the intellect (*'aql*, from 'Q-L, “to bind”), he adamantly affirms that the *'aql* and the imagination are limited and contingent. Neither can grasp the unseen, for the unseen is beyond individuals (*shakḥ*), substances (*jawhar*), or accidents (*'araḍ*). As he puts it: “the intellect in its essence is limited (*mahdūd*), whereas faith (*īmān*) is unlimited.”¹⁶ Logic chopping and intellectual argumentation do not engender certainty. Rather, they act as supports for the “spirit of faith,” which are a prelude to certainty (*yaqīn*). For Ibn Barrajān, faith is not blind.¹⁷ It is animated by the intellect, and it in turn stimulates the “inner senses” of the virtuous soul (*al-ḥawāss al-bāṭina*),¹⁸ which then facilitate “witnessing” of the unseen (*mushāhadat al-ghayb*).

To put it differently, the “spirit of faith” (*rūḥ al-īmān*) is to the Mu'tabir what the conduit of revelation (the “holy spirit” or *rūḥ al-quḍus*) is to prophets.¹⁹ For it is through the “spirit of faith” that the contemplator

¹³ For a thorough survey of Muslim conceptions and attitudes toward the hereafter, see Lange, *Paradise and Hell*.

¹⁴ On the functions of the intellect and heart in relation to mystical knowledge, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 303–304.

¹⁵ *Īdāb*, ¶128. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 189.

¹⁷ *Īmān*, from *amn* denotes “a state of secure confidence in God” and to say *āmantu*, “I have faith” is to say “I have secure confidence in God.”

¹⁸ Ibn Barrajān's understanding of the inner senses may have been influenced by Ibn Sīnā's theory of the soul. However, the latter's works were not very influential in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus, especially when compared to their impact in the East at the same period. For Ibn Barrajān's theory of the soul, the inner senses (*al-ḥawāss al-bāṭina*) and the inner servant (*al-'abd al-bāṭin*), see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 278, 359, 405; II, pp. 4, 13; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, I, pp. 53–54, 123.

¹⁹ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 299; II, p. 266.

accesses the unseen and receives inspiration (*ilhām*) –“minor revelations” as it were, from on high.²⁰ Only the inner sense experience of the unseen can generate certainty, or “empirical evidence.” The inner senses are thus the key to certainty, true knowledge, and sincere servanthood,²¹ and the certainty of the Mu‘tabir is rooted in empirical knowledge. This empirical evidence is not based on outward observation, experimentation, and outward sense experience, but rather on an empiricism of the self. The Mu‘tabir “smells” and “senses” the unseen like the subtle “creeping of the ant” (*dabīb al-naml*).²² That is why Ibn Barrajān repeatedly insists that the ‘*ibra* is a knowledge-centered quest and that the Mu‘tabir is described in the Qur’ān as “firmly rooted in knowledge” (pl. *al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm*).²³

At the highest stage of certainty,

[The Mu‘tabir] tastes the unseen, smells, feels [it] like the crawling of ants with vision, hearing, and innate sensation, so that he indeed senses the crawling of the reprehensible incoming thoughts before they descend upon the tablet of his heart.²⁴

Ibn Barrajān’s discussions of *i’tibār* thus center on the intellect, the spirit of faith, and the inner senses. These three elements together generate wisdom (*hikma*),²⁵ which he defines as the identification of the meanings and consequences of the divine names in created existence, and the ascension through those meanings into the next world.²⁶ Regarding wisdom, he states:

Know that wisdom is the knower’s ladder of salvation, and his ascent to the locus of proximity to his Lord and earning His good-pleasure. Whoever lacks it, or fails to apply it, lacks proximity to his Lord. And whoever is not wise nor a lover of

²⁰ Gril discusses Ibn Barrajān’s concept of *ilhām* in “La ‘Lecture Supérieure,’” p. 516. On *ilhām*, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 280–281, 292, 328. See also Ibn Barrajān’s introduction (*muqaddima*) to the *Tanbīh* for an extensive discussion of “inspiration” (*ilhām*) and “unveiling” (*mukāshafa*). He defines inspiration (*ilhām*) as a glimpse of the treasures of the non-manifest world (*bāṭin*) that descends onto the “tablet of the heart” (*lawḥ al-qalb*). *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 56–57. For a discussion of the difference between prophethood and sainthood, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 511–512.

²¹ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 61. ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 124–25.

²³ Ibn Barrajān equates the Mu‘tabirūn with those “firmly rooted in knowledge” (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm*) (Q. 4:162). He argues that “firm rootedness” (*rusūkh*) denotes “the penetration of one thing into another” (*wulūj*). The Arabs, for instance, say that “an arrow penetrated into the ground” (*rasakha al-sahm fī al-ard*), just as “firmly rooted” scholars (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm*) penetrate from the outward to the inward aspect of reality by means of their intellect. *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 497.

²⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 124. ²⁵ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 148. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 148.

wisdom by which God sent the messengers, descended His books, and created the heavens and earth and what is between them, continues to descend lower in his affair in knowledge and deeds.²⁷

The “paradise of certainty” (*jannat al-yaqīn*)²⁸ is the supreme experience of the mystic,²⁹ the fruit of wisdom, and the “minor heaven” (*al-janna al-ṣuḡhrā*).³⁰ Thus Ibn Barraḡān’s concept of *i'tibār* is not an exercise in imaginative (*tawahhum*) or correlative thought that is meant to cultivate intense emotions, but rather as a movement from abstract belief to empirical self-knowledge and awareness. It is a nondiscursive, participative, symbolic, and associative engagement with God’s effects and marks in the cosmos, in scripture, and in the human self. *I'tibār* results in a paradigmatic shift of consciousness that prolongs, anticipates, and ultimately identifies with the heavenly abode.

Ibn Barraḡān’s *i'tibār*, moreover, rests on a number of metaphysical precepts. He presumes that “each outward reality [in this world] has an inward reality [in the next] which precedes it” (*li-kulli ḥaqīqa ḥaqq yataqaddamuhā*).³¹ For instance, prophets have an outward reality that is human and mortal (*basharī*), just as they have an inward angelic reality (*malakī*). Unbelievers perceive the prophets’ human dimension, just as the Mu’tabirūn recognize their angelic states. By the same token, the Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created discussed in Chapter 5 consists outwardly of heavens, spheres, stars, sun, moon, air, oceans, plants, animals, humans, and jinn. It’s outward shell is the world of divine acts (*af’āl*) and secondary causes (*asbāb*), but its inward reality is none other than the self-revealing God (The Clear Reality, *al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*).³²

Ibn Barraḡān also conceives of contemplation as a journey of recollection back to the preexistential reality of the human soul. Interestingly, he primarily speaks of the forward-oriented reflective process as taking place

²⁷ Ibid., I, p. 143. For more on *ḥikma*, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 226, 233.

²⁸ Ibid., II, p. 87. On wisdom, see also *Ibid*, I, pp. 354–355, 359.

²⁹ Ibn Barraḡān boldly proclaims that “if faith were to arrive at *i'tibār* through pure witnessing, then the attribute of ‘faith in the unseen’ (*ṣifat al-īmān bi-l-ghayb*) would cease to exist.” To illustrate this point, Ibn Barraḡān compares the perceived realities of three men. The first is a motionless sleeper who is unaware of his sense faculties. The second is a dreamer who thinks he is aware of his sense faculties. And the third is awakened and perceives the unseen directly. The realized Mu’tabir witnesses that which is unseen for the sleepers. *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 347.

³⁰ Ibid., I, p. 112.

³¹ Ibid., V, p. 218. This expression is evoked several times in Ibn Barraḡān’s works (e.g. *Īdāb*, ¶929) and has its root in a Ḥadīth report. See Ibn Hibbān, *al-Majrūbīn*, #83 (I, p. 164).

³² *Īdāb*, ¶326–327.

through the intellect (*‘aql*), whereas inward recollection takes place in the heart (*qalb*) or the kernel (*lubb*). In any event, Ibn Barraġān stresses that the Mu‘tabir does not “acquire” true knowledge but rather “recalls” it from his preexistential state on the Qur’ānic Day of the Covenant. That is why acquiring spiritual knowledge is a process of remembrance (*tadhakkur*) not of learning (*ta‘allum*):

We do not acquire today knowledge that we did not possess before our souls were brought into existence. Rather, we are now recalling knowledge that we already possessed prior to our [earthly] existence on the [day of the] covenant and affirmation [of God’s lordship].³³

Moreover, *i‘tibār* is not only a crossing *from* the visible *to* the unseen, but also the reverse. That is, the Mu‘tabir contemplates celestial realities through visible forms, and visible forms through celestial realities. Ibn Barraġān discusses the bidirectionality of *i‘tibār* in several passages:

Every affair has a point of ascent and descent, and just as the crossing (*‘ibra*) can ascend upward, it can also descend downward to the seven earths, to what is below them, to *sijjīn* [a location or river of hell], to the reality of hellfire.³⁴

The *‘ibra* is the meditator’s witnessing with his knowledge and heart of that which he grasps in his kernel (*lubb*). And since the object being contemplated pertains to this world, let him leap (*qafz*) with sagacity to its source as it exists in the next world, and let him cross (*ya‘bur*) from the things remembered here, and from the things witnessed here, to the unseen . . . Let us measure objects in relation to their counterparts [in the other world], and the existent things of one abode in relation to their likes [in the other].³⁵

I‘tibār can thus be experienced as an ascent or a descent. For example Ibn Barraġān ascends from the four seasons to divisions of paradise.³⁶ Or he beholds rain that revives barren earth as a portal to the higher reality of revelation that enlivens dead hearts.³⁷ Conversely, the Qur’ān describes the denizens of paradise as sitting in parallel arrangements (Q. 15:47). This celestial harmony is a point of descent to the love that the pious have for one another in this world.³⁸ And finally, the

³³ Ibid., ¶117. See also *Sharḥ*, I, p. 361. ³⁴ *Sharḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 313.

³⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, p. 137.

³⁶ Ibn Barraġān usually makes this remark when commenting on the verse *And beyond these are two Gardens* (Q. 55:62), as well as a sound ḥadīth (Bukhārī, #7444; Muslim, #180) that describes four paradisaal abodes as “Two Gardens of gold, their vessels and everything in them; and two Gardens of silver, their vessels and everything in them.” See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 261.

³⁷ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 342. For further examples, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 274–275.

³⁸ *Īdāb*, ¶243–44, 552, 734, 754–755.

descent of qualities of the divine names can be traced by *i'tibār*. For instance, the name “The Merciful” is beheld in a mother’s unconditional love for her child.

Negotiating the Boundaries of the Unseen

Ibn Barrajan’s writings mark the culmination of a longstanding Andalusī mystical discourse on *i'tibār* harking back to the fourth-/tenth-century thought of Ibn Masarra. This discourse evolved considerably from its Marassan origins under the pressure of polemical debates and accusations of heresy. Ibn Barrajan articulated his position in this debate on the unseen by consciously anchoring his idea of *i'tibār* in the language of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. Despite his faithfulness to scripture, however, it is evident from a close reading of Ibn Barrajan’s writings (not to mention the circumstances of his death) that his teachings raised eyebrows. Even before his arrest in Cordoba, he was accused by scholarly peers of attempting to transgress the boundaries of the unseen, an act implicitly associated with *bāṭiniyya*, the employment of jinn for magical purposes, and astrological speculations. In response to a purportedly “hypothetical” question from an unnamed challenger, Ibn Barrajan defends his position as being the “most worthy state of faith in the unseen,” and defines the unseen realm itself as a category of existence that is relative to the believer.³⁹ While he concedes that the unseen is “that which is not perceived by the senses,”⁴⁰ he insists that the only realm that is “absolutely unseen” is “The Unseen of the Unseen” (*ghayb al-ghayb*); namely the realm of mysteries reserved by God in His treasures for Him alone. All other realms of existence are relative to the beholder.⁴¹ For,

[The unseen] is only unseen in relation to God’s addressees (*mukhāṭabūn*). As for the One Who addresses us, there is no unseen for Him.⁴²

In a word: the boundaries of the “unseen” are determined by the perception of the seer. Ibn Barrajan redefines the “unseen realm” (*ghayb*) as a relative category of existence, thereby diffusing the excessive theological transcendentalism that posits the unseen world (*ghayb*) as an inaccessible abode that is “out there” and “yet-to-come.” He insists that what is “unseen” for a common believer may be “visible” for a Muṭabir; and that which is unseen for the latter may be visible for prophets.⁴³ Ibn

³⁹ See *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 346–348. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 74–75.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 346–348. ⁴² *Ibid.*, III, pp. 74–75. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 253.

Barrajān maintains that the paradisaical and infernal realities of the hereafter can be witnessed (*mushāhada*), not by the naked eye, but by the eye of faith and the inner senses through “unveiling” (*mukāshafa*). For the visible world both veils and reveals the unseen. It signals the unseen because it is an integral part of it.⁴⁴

Ibn Barrajān finds reference for his understanding of the unseen in the Qur’ān itself which discusses various modalities, or “stations of the unseen” (*manāzil al-ghayb*). For instance, the “unseen” developmental stages of a fetus during gestation are prefigured within a sperm-drop (e.g., Q. 22:5), just as a full-fledged tree is prefigured already in its seed. Or again, martyrs are described as alive and joyful (Q. 3:169–171) in the unseen realm just as they are deceased in the herebelow.⁴⁵ Finally, certain creatures, such as jinn and angels inhabit both the visible and the unseen. What is visible for the latter is invisible for ordinary humans.⁴⁶ Ibn Barrajān thus concludes that in the final analysis, the visible and unseen (*shahāda, ghayb*), or this world and the next (*dunyā/ākhirā*) are terms of convenience used to describe an unbroken ontological continuum. He insists that “God hides the next world in the shade of this world” (*khabba ‘a al-ākhirā fī zill al-dunyā*),⁴⁷ and, “the hereafter surrounds this world. It is hidden within it, yet concealed from us.”⁴⁸

Despite his opposition to proponents of theological transcendentalism, Ibn Barrajān categorically and repeatedly affirms on the basis of several Prophetic sayings about the beatific vision (*al-ru‘ya al-karīma*) that neither common believers nor the spiritual elite can ever experience an ocular vision of God, nor a worldly vision of heaven.⁴⁹ In so doing, Ibn Barrajān distances himself from early Sufi groups such as the Nussāk (lit. “the pious movement”) who claimed ocular vision of God and paradise.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ For a related discussion, see *Ibid.*, I, p. 193. See also Chapter 5 for more on Ibn Barrajān’s ontology.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III, pp. 276–277. ⁴⁶ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 38. ⁴⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 233.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 144.

⁴⁹ For further discussions of *al-ru‘ya al-karīma* or *al-tajallī al-‘alī* in Ibn Barrajān’s works, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 202, 410–412; II, pp. 89–94, 96–97, 96–97, 101–102, 193; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, 191, II, pp. 249–254, 510–511; IV, 184, 256–257; V, 211–215, 414; and *Īdāb* index.

⁵⁰ Taking his lead from early Sufis like Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Ibn Barrajān denies the possibility of attaining a physical, this-worldly vision of God in this life (E.g., *Īdāb*, ¶483). He repeatedly insists on this point, citing the ḥadīth “You will see your Lord just as you see the moon on the night of the full moon with no veil beneath it” (Bukhārī, #554, #7435; Muslim, #633). The denial of an anthropomorphic vision of God in this world was articulated in response to early Sufi

He also rejects nondualist expressions of divine immersion and self-annihilation (*fanā'*) uttered by the likes of Bisṭāmī and Ḥallāj that are suggestive of indwelling (*ḥulūl*).⁵¹ Siding with the Ash'arīs, he contends that God's self-disclosure is only seen by the eyes in the next world where all believers shall enjoy His sight with ever increasing intensity. Even the true mystic grasps only a partial glimpse of the Reality Upon Which Creation Is Created (ḤMBK), and "sees" God as the Clear Reality (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*) that becomes fully manifest in the hereafter (Chapter 5).

For Ibn Barraḡān, therefore, the "crossing into the unseen" is an intermediate theological position that straddles the creedal belief of Ash'arism, theological literalism, and ordinary believers on the one hand, and the perceived excesses of radical Sufism and Shī'ī-Isma'īlī esoterism on the other.

His Assessment of Ibn Masarra's *i'tibār*

Ibn Barraḡān's conflicting attitude toward controversial Sufis is also extended to Ibn Masarra. Based on a close reading of Ibn Barraḡān's writings on *i'tibār*, it can be inferred that he consciously drew from Ibn Masarra while disassociating himself from the controversies that tainted his legacy (see Chapter 1). Similarly, Ibn Barraḡān criticized philosophers (*falāsifa*) who give priority to reason over revelation. In true Masarran vein, he maintains that revelation and creation are complementary and mutually explanatory manifestations of God. He holds that the symbolic significance of God's signs in nature can only be fully deciphered with the assistance of revelatory knowledge, just as Qur'ānic passages can be grasped with basic knowledge of the natural world. For instance, the mule's abnormal behavior in the anecdote above is only explicable by recourse to Ḥadīth, just as verses such as *the stars and the trees prostrate [to God]* (Q. 55:6) require the knowledge of stars and trees in the first place.

However, Ibn Barraḡān appears to have believed that Ibn Masarra went too far in equating *i'tibār* in its function with revelation (*wahy*), thereby lending himself to accusations of heresy. For instance, Ibn Masarra states unequivocally that prophecy and *i'tibār* "are equal and without distinction."⁵² Ibn Masarra's wording can certainly be interpreted to

renunciants, known as the "Nussāk," who claimed ocular and physical contact with God in this world (Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, I, p. 319).

⁵¹ See Ibn Barraḡān's mixed appraisal of the immanentist utterances made by Sufis like Ḥallāj and Bisṭāmī in *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 135–139. This passage is analyzed in Chapter 2.

⁵² Ibn Masarra, *Min qaḍāyā al-fikr al-Islāmī*, p. 359.

mean that revelation is dispensable, or conversely, that prophecy can be acquired (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*). In contrast to Ibn Masarra and perhaps owing to the growing influence of Ash‘arism in al-Andalus, Ibn Barraĵān emphasizes that the light of revelation is the Mu‘tabir’s indispensable guide for crossing into the unseen.⁵³ He underscores the primacy of revelation and states that without it, *i‘tibār* loses its efficacy. He enjoins his reader to cling to the rope of revelation, for: “Lo! Lo! The intellect is only illuminated by prophecy!”⁵⁴

His View of the *Falāsifa*

Ibn Masarra’s attitude toward revelation was met with criticism by his Andalusī contemporaries and resonated with the tendency of certain philosophers (*falāsifa*), including fourth-/tenth-century figures such as Farābī (d. 950) or Abū Bark al-Rāzī (d. 925), to grant primacy to reason over revelation. It is for this very reason that Ibn Barraĵān reserves his harshest criticisms for the *falāsifa* whom he accuses of worshipping their intellectual constructs (*ma‘qūlāt*), following reason at the expense of prophecy, and limiting their knowledge to the world of causes and intermediaries. While some philosophers may have arrived at knowledge of divine unity, he contends that they still fall short of its full implications by forsaking the revealed law. Ibn Barraĵān counsels his readers to be among the “followers of the revealed message” (*atbā‘ al-risāla*) who adhere to God’s teachings, rather than “followers of the philosophers” (*atbā‘ al-falāsifa*) who adulate the intellect.⁵⁵ His staunch criticism of the “followers of the philosophers” marks conscious distancing from polemics and accusations leveled against both philosophy and Masarrism in al-Andalus.

An Egalitarian Spirituality?

One of the fascinating consequences of Ibn Barraĵān’s compromise discourse on *i‘tibār* is his espousal of a style of piety that is equally open and available to all sincere Muslims. There is a tangible streak of egalitarian piety in his works, and a downplaying of the elite-commoner binary that is so sharply pronounced in classical Sufi texts. His quest for God was informal, open, and accessible to any seeker with a basic religious education and an interest in an intensified mystical experience. Admittedly,

⁵³ *Īdāb*, ¶512 ⁵⁴ *Sharb*, I, p. 317. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 307, 317.

elitist Sufi discourse was less viable in Ibn Barraġān's day, for he was the product of a preinstitutionalized (pre-*ṭarīqa*) Andalusī mystical tradition. Unlike Abū Madyan, Ibn Barraġān did not operate within codified Sufi initiatory rites, litanies, and spiritual guidance at the hands of an indispensable master. Rites of initiation and other Sufi institutionalizations, which often cement the commoner-elite binary, never figured into his discussions.

This is not to say that Ibn Barraġān rejected Sufi discourse on the cosmic function, spiritual sanctity, perceptive powers, and epistemological supremacy of the friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*) vis-à-vis commoners, theologians, and legal scholars.⁵⁶ However, in contrast to Sufi manuals on ethics by the likes of Qushayrī, or to Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī esoteric treatises by a Kirmānī, and even later Sufi-Philosophical teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Barraġān tends to challenge the sharp binary between a "spiritual elite" (*khawāṣṣ*) and "common believers" (*'awāmm*). For instance, one hardly comes across codified ethical discussions in Ibn Barraġān's writings where, for example, the virtue of "reliance upon God (*tawakkul*) for the elite implies *x*, and for the commoners implies *y*." Moreover, Ibn Barraġān does not uphold the notion that certain esoteric sciences, such as the science of letters, are reserved exclusively for the elite. In contrast to many esoteric authors, he concedes that knowledge of the disconnected letters of the Qur'ān (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*) is open to any believer with a basic grasp of his cosmology and Arabic phonetics. His discussions of *i'tibār* are marked by a certain freedom, flexibility, and egalitarianism. Ibn Barraġān discusses the signs of God as portals that are open to any believer interested in undertaking the crossing. Ibn Barraġān never explicitly states that the *'ibra* and the unseen are confined exclusively to an initiated, spiritual, or scholarly elite. He concedes that even junior scholars and mystics who are at the earliest stages of their quest for an experience of the divine can bear and identify traces of the most sublime mystical truths short of prophecy itself (which is the exclusive realm of the prophets) in subtle and hidden ways.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ For discussions of Sufi epistemology, the hierarchy and ranks of scholars and believers, powers of perception of the friends of God (*awliyā'*), unveiling (*kashf*), witnessing (*mushāhada*), inspiration (*ilhām*), sanctity (*wilāya*), and evidentiary miracles of saints (sing. *karāma*) see *Sharḥ*, I, p. 137; II, pp. 6, 103 121–24; *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 83–84, 124–28, 135, 144–45, 294–95, 354; III, pp. 55–64, 113–15, 484, 395; IV, pp. 56, 71–72, 144–45; V, pp. 81, 95–96, 155, 511–12; *Īdāh*, ¶432, and relevant index entries.

⁵⁷ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 355.

II THE DESCENT OF THE DIVINE COMMAND

The Structure of the Cosmos

Like Ibn Masarra and Ibn Qasī, the concept of “divine command” plays a prominent role in Ibn Barraġān’s cosmology.⁵⁸ He almost consistently ties his discussions of *i’tibār* to the descent of God’s command (*tanzīl amr*), for it generates all cycles of time and determination in the “world of creation,” which are the object of *i’tibār*. Moreover, *i’tibār* is an exercise in tracing the divine command’s generation and absorption of all things. Ibn Barraġān thus devotes extensive passages to explaining how, through *i’tibār*, one can grasp the way in which the “world of creation” (*‘ālam al-khalq*) as a whole relates to the “world of the command” (*‘ālam al-amr*).

Building on the medieval Ptolemaic geocentric system of planetary rotations, Ibn Barraġān conceived of a logically coherent and scripturally faithful cosmology that fully explains cosmic reality and the sensible world as it presents itself to the human eye. The “world of creation” (“everything other than God,” *mā siwā Allāh*) is in its entirety a sign of God that issues from His command and returns back to Him. God transcends the created realm of time and space.⁵⁹ Scriptural references to His proximity (*qurb*) and distance (*bu’d*) do not imply spatial extension but rather divine friendship (*wilāya*) and disavowal (*barā’ā*).⁶⁰ Creation (*khalq*) begins at the divine throne which marks the boundary between the visible and the transcendent, between metaphysics and astronomy.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 33–63; idem, “Was Ibn Qasī A Šūfi?” pp. 212–215.

⁵⁹ See *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 412–413; *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 371–372; V, pp. 316–317.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 355.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 252–253. The term *‘arsh* (throne) literally denotes an overhead roof structure that provides shade. Ibn Barraġān explains that “throne” is a relational term since each level of the cosmos is separated from the one beneath it by a *‘arsh*. The ultimate divine throne is the supreme line of demarcation between creation and the eternal. Therefore, there are many “thrones,” since every higher throne is higher than the one beneath it, and lower than the one above it. The divine command descends and ascends via the *‘arsh* located at every level of the cosmos. Each *‘arsh*, moreover, has its own “footstool” (*kursī*), or terrestrial layer of demarcation, wherefrom the command differentiates into distinct determinations. From this perspective, the term *‘arsh* is synonymous with “sky” (*samā’*), and correlates with “earth” (*arḍ*) or “terrestrial layer” (*farsh*). An analogy could be drawn with floors and roofs of a multilayered building: the floor (*farsh*) of the third level is the roof (*‘arsh*) of the second, while the floor (*farsh*) of the fourth is the roof (*‘arsh*) of the third (*Ibid.*, IV, pp. 370–372). Ibn Barraġān also refers to this cosmological relationality by the terms “high heavens” (*samāwāt ‘ulā*) and the “low heavens” (*samāwāt dunā*) (*Ibid.*, III, p. 513) and asserts that Arabs of old used the term *samā’* in this

The throne *is upon the water* (Q. 11:7), the animating and vital principle of life in creation.⁶² Beneath the water lies the footstool (*kursī*) which marks the first polarization of the divine command. The footstool rests above the spheres and is immeasurably greater than the seven heavens combined. The latter, in relation to the footstool, are “like a ring cast into a vast barren desert” (*ka-halaqa mulqāt fi arḍ falāt*).⁶³ The Supreme Sphere (*al-falak al-ʿazam*) lies beneath the footstool. It is attested Qurʾānically by the verse *And all swim in a sphere* (Q. 36:40) and turns under the governance of the divine Command. Its movement sets creation and the revolution of the spheres into motion. All spheres turn in synchronized revolutions by its turning, and through it God *reveals in every sky its command* (Q. 41:12).⁶⁴

Beneath the Supreme Sphere sits the “sphere of the constellations” (*falak al-burūj*, lit. sphere of the 12 “towers” of the zodiac), commonly referred to as the “sphere of fixed stars.” It is followed by seven stories of heaven and earth, each containing one of the seven planets, or “shining stars” (*al-darārī*) (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, plus the Sun in the middle fourth sphere, and the Moon at the lowest sphere) in revolving cycles.⁶⁵ Each of these spheres is the cause (*sabab*) of the one beneath it, and is caused by the one above it. In contrast, the Supreme Sphere is caused by none other than the divine Command that issues from the Causer of Causes (*musabbib al-asbāb*). The sublunar sphere of our earth consists of the natural world with its four basic tendencies, or “elements” (*ṭabāʾiʿ*, heat, cold, wetness, dryness), in addition to the diurnal revolution of the “sphere of day and night,” the “sphere of the winds” (*falak al-riyāḥ*), and the ebb and flow of the oceans, or the “sphere of the waters” (*falak al-miyāḥ*), which is the closest sphere to our earth. The earth, which is formed in the shape of an outstretched flat disk, contains seven climates

correlational sense (*Sharḥ*, I, pp. 307–308). Ibn Qasī has a similar conception of the thrones, see Ebstein, “Was Ibn Qasī A Šūfī?,” pp. 208–209.

⁶² See Chapter 5 for an analysis of Ibn Barraġān’s understanding of Qurʾānic *māʾ*.

⁶³ This expression, which is repeatedly used by Ibn Barraġān to illustrate the grandeur of the throne and footstool in relation to the seven heavens (e.g. *Tanbīḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, V, pp. 40–41) is taken from a weak ḥadīth that is cited in a variety of sources, including Aṣḥāhānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, I, pp. 166–167. Its modern equivalent would be the idiom “x is like a needle in a haystack.”

⁶⁴ For more on the “Supreme Sphere,” or the “All-Encompassing Sphere” (*al-falak al-muḥīṭ* or *al-jāmiʿ*) see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 355–356; *Tanbīḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 519; V, pp. 40–41; *Īdāb*, ¶617.

⁶⁵ For more on the spheres, planets, and constellations, see *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 74, 307–308; 310–311; *Tanbīḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 304–305; II, pp. 238–239; IV, pp. 469–470, 518–519; V, pp. 280–283; and *Īdāb* index entries under *al-samāwāt al-sabʿ*, and *falak*.

(sing. *iqḷīm*) that serve as reminders of the seven spheres above, and the seven earths below (*arādīn sab*).⁶⁶

The Descent of the Divine Command

Ibn Barrajān frequently draws attention to the verse, *Do not creation and command belong to Him* (Q. 7:54).⁶⁷ The divine command – or simply the “Word” (*al-kalima*) in reference to the Qur’ānic fiat “Be!” (*kun*) – generates and engulfs the complex world of creation. The divine command is of two types: the prescriptive command (*amr shar’*) that generates religious law, and the creative command (*amr kawn*) that generates the universe.⁶⁸ The two commands are interrelated, since God’s prescriptive commands are indicated by the spheres that rotate by the creative command. The times of prayer, for instance, are signaled by the positioning of the sun, and the beginning of month of Ramadan is signaled by the moon.

The creative command is not only linked to the prescriptive command, but “permeates the entirety [of creation] just as nourishment permeates the parts of the body.”⁶⁹ For the command is “within” creation, since creation could not exist without it, yet it also transcends it and encompasses the “containers of time and space” (*zurūf*) by its power, knowledge, desire, bestowal of existence, self-subsistence, and other properties.⁷⁰ God issues His creative command from the throne (*‘arsh*) upon which He “sits.”⁷¹ His command interacts with creation

⁶⁶ *Sharb*, I, p. 307–309. ⁶⁷ See *Īdāh* index entries under “*al-khalq wa-l-amr*.”

⁶⁸ *Sharb*, I, p. 275. ⁶⁹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 39. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 153.

⁷¹ Ibn Barrajān insists that God’s sitting (*istiwā’*) does not take place in a physical sense, since physicality terminates at the divine throne. “There has been much disagreement among scholars of the Muslim Community over the [nature of God’s] arriving, descending, and coming. But God does not deprive the bulk of the Community from true belief, although He distributes it among them in accordance to the measure of guidance and knowledge that He gives them. Some interpret ‘arriving’ as the arriving of His command; others say that His command descends from Him and ascends to Him forever . . . The decisive statement in this matter of faith and belief . . . is that God really arrives and descends, not like normal descending or arriving such that He occupies a place while another place is devoid of Him . . . but like the advancing radiance and light [of the sun and moon] . . . so one should not imagine transferal nor motion on His part. It is rather His self-disclosure and self-manifestation according to when, what, how, and where He desires” (*Ibid.*, V, p. 493). Elsewhere, Ibn Barrajān insists that “God descends on the day [of judgment] from His throne to the footstool of decree (*kursī al-qaḍā’*) without transferal (*min ghayr tanaqqul*)” (*Sharb*, II, p. 65; see also p. 107). Ibn Barrajān remarks that God ascribes the act of sitting upon the throne to Himself just as He calls the Ka’ba “His sacred house” even as houses cannot contain Him (*Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV,

through executive angels. It first then descends as a united whole upon the throne-carrier angels,⁷² then the footstool (*kursī*) where it differentiates into distinct determinations and decrees.⁷³ The angels carry out God's differentiating command at every successive heavenly sphere, until it finally attains its furthest limit of creation with man.

When discussing the totality of creation issuing from a single command, Ibn Barraġān describes its ascent through the posthumous worlds of the isthmus, resurrection, hell and paradise, then back to its divine origin. Ibn Barraġān also describes the descent and ascent of the divine command through the various levels of the cosmos in concrete religious imagery:

The Messenger of God said: When God decrees the command in heaven, the angels hear it like the banging of a [metal] chain upon a slab of rock. Then the angels lower their wings in surrender to the command. When terror is lifted from their hearts, they come to know what God had commanded them to do, and those below them say: *What said Your Lord?* (Q. 34:23). He then causes them speak the truth of what He desires from them and they repeat it, and their circle turns with the command that was intended for them just as the circle turned for those above them with the command intended for them. Then the second tells the third, *What said Your Lord?* (Q. 34:23) and God causes them to speak the truth on His behalf and they relate it all, and they act upon His command. And so it goes from heaven to heaven. The command descends from command to command in this manner, then to the furthest boundary of the command. They all act upon what was commanded of them, used by His command and desire, controlled by His power, agency, and capacity over them all.⁷⁴

The Cycles of Determination

The divine command (*amr*) remains forever transcendent vis-à-vis creation. It manifests through its differentiated ordinances (sing. *ḥukm*) and

p. 371). For more on God's relation to the throne and space, see Ibid., I, p. 131; II, pp. 252–253; III, p. 57.

⁷² Ibid., V, p. 187. Occasionally Ibn Barraġān discusses the command as rising from below, as in the case of plants that receive the command from water that descends from the heavens then ascends within the plants, causing it to grow. This discussion is similar to Ibn Masarra's treatise on *I'tibār. Sharb*, I, p. 386.

⁷³ The footstool is "the site of the ordinance" (*mawḍi' al-ḥukm*) (Ibid., I, p. 314). God also descends to the "footstool of decreeing" (*kursī al-qaḍā'*) on the Day of Judgment. (Ibid., II, p. 65). Moreover, just as there is a throne between every heaven, likewise there is a "footstool" (*kursī*) at each heaven wherewith the command differentiates into distinct determinations. *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 370–371.

⁷⁴ Ibid., IV, pp. 518–519.

not as a command *qua* command. In this manner, it traverses time and space, as indicated by a literal reading of Q. 32:5: *He directs the command from heaven to earth, then it ascends unto Him in a day whose measure is 1,000 years of your reckoning.* The command journeys through creation in a downward linear progression that spans “five hundred years,” as explained below. The command itself journeys along a straight line and does not partake in creation. Its ruling properties, however, are manifested by the command’s differentiations and move along circular rotations. The simultaneous linear and cyclical movements of the command account for its bending journey along an arc of descent and ascent, as well as the circularity of its differentiated determinations in creation:

The ascent and descent of the command is a linear movement toward the center, whereas the movement of the command’s governance is a circular movement around the center. It is well-known that a straight line that passes through the center of the circle from one point of the circumference to the other is the length of half the arc of the circle, and that one part of the sphere ascends with the descent of the other part. This means that the ascending and descending parts of the circle, whenever the measure of distance of the journeyer from its circumference passing through the center to [the other end of] the circumference [i.e., the diameter], is 500 years of ascent, and its descending counterpart is also 500 years. Hence the verse: *He directs the command from heaven to earth, then it ascends unto Him in a day whose measure is 1,000 years of your reckoning.* (Q. 32:5). This being the case, the measure of the circumference of the circle is a journey of 1,000 years, which means that it is [the measuring distance] of seven earths and seven heavens. The Messenger of God said: “verily, what is between one heaven and another, and between one earth and another, is 500, [and] 500.” This is a description of the distance between one heaven and the next, and one earth and the next.⁷⁵

Ibn Barraĵān does not discuss his estimation of the spatial length of the 1,000-year journey of the command across the cosmos. He explains, however, that God manifests in the world of creation through the governing properties of His command. These governing properties, like the great arc of descent and ascent of the command itself, unfold in cyclical determinations.⁷⁶ All manifestations in the created world thus operate in

⁷⁵ Ibid., V, p. 382, see also pp. 383–384. The ḥadīth has a weak chain of transmission (*isnād*), and is cited in Aḥmad, *Musnad*, #11719; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, #2540, 3394; Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #7405. Ibn Barraĵān states explicitly: “This equals 1,000 years of descent and ascent according to our common journeying. But the ascent of the command to Him is not in time.” *Tanbīḥ*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 369.

⁷⁶ See *Īdāḥ* index entries under *dawā’ir al-taqdīr*.

cycles,⁷⁷ which are determined by the wisdom inherent in God's command (*amr*) and governance (*tadbīr*):⁷⁸

The cycles of God's ordinances (*dawā'ir hikam Allāh*) turn by God's wisdom that is within them.⁷⁹

All the channels of divine wisdom (*majāri hikmat Allāh*) in this world and the next flow in cycles of firmly fixed circularity, so that the end-points of the wisdom return to their starting-points, only for the starting-point to come back to their end-points. God firmly fixed His command in this manner throughout earth and heaven, channeling the spheres through their places of ascent and descent. He guided in this manner the sun, moon, stars, winds, night, and day, measuring in this manner their hours, minutes of the hours, and waymarks. God also measured out His giving, stripping, and granting of victory for every animate being, its fading away, configuration, growth, destruction, obliteration, or becoming green, or being in bliss, increase or decrease, felicity or wretchedness, health or illness, wellbeing or affliction, good or evil, guidance or misguidance, all of that as an ordinance from His measuring [in which] the end-points return to the starting-point, and the starting-points go back to the end-point according to the inevitable measuring of His desire . . .⁸⁰

The circularity of the cycles of determination is created through a combination of motion (*ḥaraka*) and rest (*sukūn*). The inner command which propels the cycle is located at the axial center (*miḥwar*), and is in a state of rest. The outward manifestations of the command form the bending circumference of the circle which is in a state of motion. The world of creation issues from the cycle-engendering combination of motion and rest of the divine command, and therefore consists of cycles that themselves contain cycles within cycles:⁸¹

You should conceive of all cycles in this manner, from the breaths of creatures, to hours, days, nights, Fridays, months, seasons of the year, to its completion . . . to the termination of appointed times and completion of durations, and the end of the motion of the spheres with the times, and the predestined ordinances in post-eternity, and comprising all creation and command touching all created things, tiny and great, small and large, visible and invisible, including the smaller circles to the one expressed in the verse *And He it is Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Each swims in a sphere.* (Q. 21:33). The smallest circle, according to our description above of the creation and command within it and through it, is part of a larger one, which itself is part of a larger one. . . and so it goes for what is above the seven heavens and below the seven earths, until *Surely unto God all things reach at least* (Q. 42:53) *And to Him the whole matter shall be returned* (Q. 11:123). He is the real Mover Who is not described by motion nor rest.⁸²

⁷⁷ The word Ibn Barrajān uses for cycles is *dawā'ir* which is the used in the most general sense of the term. The *aflāk*, or spheres, are one type of cycle (*dawā'ir*).

⁷⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadi, V, pp. 40–41. ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 530–531.

⁸⁰ *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 73–75. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 73–75. ⁸² *Ibid.*

The Cyclical Concept of Time (*dawā'ir al-zamān*)

Ibn Barraġān's understanding of cyclical time rests on his notion of the cycles of determination as being "firmly fixed" in their course (*dawā'ir muḥkamat al-tadwār*). Ibn Barraġān finds strong scriptural attestation for his concept of time in the very cycles of time established by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. His theory of time also has some precedent in "The Comprehensive Epistle" (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*) of the Brethren,⁸³ and foreshadows Ibn 'Arabī's discussions of time.⁸⁴ The cycles of the world below are driven by the cycles of the world above, and both are temporally measurable. The cycles in this world account for the change and flux of the universe and define the relationship of this ever-shifting world to the immutable divine reality:

God set up this world to be an abode of transformation and fluctuation. Neither its wellbeing nor its affliction last. Rather, everything undergoes firmly fixed cycles and an interconnected governance in which one part follows the other. Thus, the cycles of wellbeing are followed by the cycles of guidance, just as the cycles of guidance are followed by the cycles of wellbeing. Likewise, the cycles of trial and vengeance are followed by the cycles of the unbelievers' wrongdoing, repudiation, and disbelief, just as the cycles of repudiation and wrongdoing are followed by the cycles of vengeance and trial from God.⁸⁵

All cycles of time come to a full stop in God. He is the axial, timeless, and transcendent center of reality. However, insofar as God interacts with creation, He does so within a fundamental measure of time referred to Qur'ānically as the Day of the Lord (Q. 22:47), which equals 50,000 years. The duration of every cycle at any sphere is also called a "day," and is measured in relation to the standard archetypal Day of the Lord.⁸⁶ The centrifugal movement away from God and the Day of the Lord accelerates the speed of time. The Day of the Lord moves at a slower pace than other cycles beneath it since it is closer to the timeless center.

The 'day' of the turning of the waters is 14 days, and the day of revolution of the moon in 28 days; and the day of Mercury is 3 months and 6 days; and the day of

⁸³ See Krinis, "Cyclical Time."

⁸⁴ See Böwering, "Ibn al-'Arabī's Concept of Time"; idem., "The Concept of Time in Islam"; and now Yūsuf, *Ibn 'Arabī – Time and Cosmology*.

⁸⁵ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 248.

⁸⁶ "The night and day of this world correspond to the celestial day (*al-nahār al-'alī*) of the next, which is cleaved from the clear horizon (*al-ufuq al-mubīn*), while night is differentiated from deep lower darkness of the bitter cold quarters of Hell (*zambarīr*)." *Tanbīh*, IV, p. 468 (There are editorial typos in Mazyadī's edition of this passage. Compare against ed. 'Adlūnī, I, pp. 503–504).

Venus is 8 months and 6 days; then the sun and its day is 1 year; then the day of Mars is 25 months; then Jupiter is 12 years; then Muqābil which is Saturn, is 30 years approximately. From there, the gaze ascends to *a day whereof the measure is 50,000 years* (Q. 70:4), and God knows what cycle that is, for what is here is a sign for what is there.⁸⁷

The cycles of days, months, seasons, years, and seasons of this world are relative to those of the hereafter and run at differing, proportional, and synchronized speeds. For instance, the alternating seasons of summer and winter are proportionally synchronized with the alternation of freezing (*zamharīr*) and scorching (*sa'īr*) in Hell.⁸⁸ Also, one day of hellfire equals a year of ordinary time in this world.⁸⁹ Consequently, the prayers of the denizens of Hell for mercy are answered only after 1,000 years because they are so distant from God. In the following passage, Ibn Barrajān's explains how the "days" or cycles of time in the lower world are synchronized with "days" or cycles of time in the upper world:

And surely a day with thy Lord is as 1,000 years of your counting (Q. 22:47), that is one day of hellfire equals a year. This is confirmed by the description of the state of its denizens as *abiding therein for ages* (sing. *ḥuqb*) *tasting therein neither coolness nor drink, save boiling water and pus* (Q. 78:23–25). None of [the lexicographers] define *ḥuqb* as being less than eighty years. It is called *ḥuqb* because the sphere encloses (*ihṭaqaba*) the entirety of that season (*faṣl*). The *ḥaqība* according to the Arabic language is that which is placed at the back of the camel saddle (*rahl*). *Ḥuqb* is also one of the names of the days of the hereafter. Since a 'day' [with the Lord] is a year [of Hell], and is [also] 1,000 years of this hasty world,⁹⁰ then a half-day [with the Lord] equals [6 months of Hell, which equals] 500 years [in this world, or 6000 lunar months]. One *faṣl* [a season, or 3 months of Hell] equals 250 years [in this world, or 3,000 lunar months]. One 'month' of that yearly cycle [in Hell] equals 1,000 lunar months, or 83 years and a third, which is the aforementioned *ḥuqb*. The sphere of that day encloses it in its entirety. Therefore when God says *they shall taste therein neither coolness nor any drink* (Q. 73:24), this spans approximately 6 *ḥuqbs*, or [6] months [of Hell] in that abode. These correspond to its summer time during which they drink therein *save boiling water* (Q. 73:25).⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 359. ⁸⁸ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 182.

⁸⁹ See his discussions of verses Q. 78:23–25 where the denizens of Hell abide therein for "ages" (*ahqāb*).

⁹⁰ This is a reference to the verse, *And surely a day with thy Lord is as 1,000 years of your counting* (Q. 22:47).

⁹¹ *Ibid*, II, p. 81. Ibn Barrajān frequently points out that hell has two seasons, summer (*ṣayf*) and winter (*shitā'*), a scorching *sa'īr* and a freezing *zamharīr*. Hell's denizens eat from bitter thorn-fruit (*darī'*, Q 88:6) in summer, and from the vile tree of Zaqqūm (Q. 44:43) in winter. See the *Idāḥ* index entries under "*ṣayf*" for further references.

The following proportions of time cycles can be deduced from Ibn Barraġān's works:

1 Day of the Lord = 1 hell-year = 1,000 world-years = 12,000 world-months

1/2 Day of the Lord = 6 hell-months = 500 world-years = 6000 world-months

3 Hell-months = 250 world-years = 3,000 world-month

1 Hell-month = 1,000 world-months = 83.3 world-years = *ḥuqb*.⁹²

The Symbolic Significance of Number 6

Number 6 plays a crucial role in Ibn Barraġān's understanding of time and cycles of determination and in his Jerusalem prediction. Ibn Barraġān sees a common pattern in all cycles of reality, and identifies number 6 as the common numerical denominator in most cycles and patterns of cosmic existence, religion, and divinity. He observes a common pattern of 6 units in the cyclical progression of most things from their divine origin, and identifies cycles in existence, religion, and divinity with 6. He finds support for his understanding of the symbolic significance of number 6 in Qur'ānic verses, aḥādīth, as well as Biblical passages from Genesis on the 6 days of creation.⁹³ Ibn Barraġān describes 6 as the perfect number, while 7 recapitulates and encompasses the wholeness of the six-fold cycle by way of summary and conclusion. Ibn Barraġān comments on the six letters of the divine name Allāh (A-L-L-Dagger Alif-H);⁹⁴ the determination of space according to 6 cardinal directions (*al-jihāt al-sitt*, north, south, east, west, above, below); the 6 developmental stages of the human fetus;⁹⁵ and 6 phases of heavenly bliss.⁹⁶ Similarly, he divides religion into 6 categories

⁹² Hell has only two seasons: summer and winter, each comprising 6 hell-months. Verses Q. 78:23–25 describe summers of hell, which span 6,000 world-months, or 500 world-years, of half a Day of the Lord.

⁹³ E.g., *Īdāb*, ¶505.

⁹⁴ The divine name Allāh comprises of 6 letters: 4 visible, 2 hidden: Alif-Lām-Lām-Dagger Alif-Hā'-Hidden Wāw. The hidden wāw manifests itself in the differentiation of creation, and concludes the name Huwa (He). The hidden wāw is a differentiation of the non-differentiated definite article Alif-Lām. When the meeting of the beginning and end of the name, the full cycle is realized. The divine name is like a circle with 6 parts, where its end returns to its origin in realization. *Sharḥ*, I, p. 50.

⁹⁵ These are water, clay, plant, sperm-drop (*nutfa*), blood clot (*'alaqa*), embryonic lump (*muḍġba*) (Q. 22:5). *Īdāb*, ¶317.

⁹⁶ "There are 6 days in the abode of permanence (*dār al-kbulūd*), plus the Day of Addition (*yaum al-mazīd*) in the hereafter is the seventh which we call in the herebelow 'Friday.'"

(*fuṣūl*) that culminate in the 7th which he identifies as the ‘*ibra*,⁹⁷ as well as knowledge.⁹⁸

This understanding of the significance of number 6 has a distant precedent in early Ismā‘īlī teachings on prophetology, imamology, and cosmology. While the Brethren attach paramount significance to the number 4,⁹⁹ Ismā‘īls hold that revelation was entrusted to six speaker-prophets, (sing. *nabī nāṭiq*) who are assigned to bring a divine law to their communities, from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad, as well as seven Mahdis.¹⁰⁰ In cosmology too, one finds 7 celestial spheres (*aflāk*), with one of the seven planets occupying each of them. They also correspond to the seven orifices in the skull. The duration of the world is, likewise, divided into multiples of astrological cycles of 6,000 years.¹⁰¹ Although Ibn Barraĵān dismisses Ismā‘īlī imamology, his focus on number 6 seems to be a distant appropriation of Ismā‘īlī teachings.¹⁰²

Īdāb, ¶392. The “Day of Addition” is Friday, or the Day of Gathering (*jumu‘a l jum‘a*) in the hereafter.

⁹⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 83–85. These parts are: (1) divinity (*al-ilāhiyya*) with its qualities and names, which contains all mystical knowledge (*ma‘rifa*); (2) oneness (*al-wabḍāniyya*) which contains all knowledge (*‘ilm*); (3) lordship (*rubūbiyya*), which entails knowing the blessings, remembering the primordial covenant, and affirming the trust of servanthood to God, believing the messengers; (4) prophecy (*nubuwwa*), which entails discerning between prophets and charlatans, prophetic miracles (*mu‘jiza*) from saintly miracles (*karāma*); (5) knowledge of the practice of servanthood (*ta‘abbud*) in the wake of the teachings of the prophets; (6) the trust (*amāna*); (7) *i‘tibār*, which is the key to knowledge and to an increase in certainty (*yaqīn*), and to the ascension to knowledge of (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), then to vision of (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) the realities of faith. All of knowledge branches out into the one hundred divine names and into knowledge as such, whose number is the number of degrees of heaven.

⁹⁸ See Ibn Barraĵān’s discussion of the six key subjects, or domains of knowledge (*ma‘arīf*) that God discloses to His chosen servants. The highest of these is an apprehension of the correspondence between the visible and the unseen worlds. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 128, 156; IV, p. 331.

⁹⁹ See Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 10–11. ¹⁰⁰ Corbin, *Histoire*, I, pp. 135–136.

¹⁰¹ The Brethren stress the cosmic importance of the cycle of 7,000 years. See *al-Risāla al-Jāmi‘a*, p. 357.

¹⁰² Pre-Fāṭimī Ismā‘īlī preachers (sing. *dā‘ī*) of the third/ninth century already put forth a doctrine of the imamate constructed around seven Mahdis, beginning with ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and ending with Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. The imāms are divided into consecutive groups of seven, whereby the seventh is the “completion” (*mutimm*) of the sequence. The latter was hailed as the Imām al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī as well as the seventh *nāṭiq*, or “speaker-prophet.” The seven speakers, beginning with the Qur’ān’s 6 “prophets with resolution” (*ulu‘l-‘azm*), are Ādam, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, ‘Īsā, Muḥammad, and finally returning Mahdī Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. The early Ismā‘īlis held that each *nāṭiq* is succeeded by a legatee (*waṣī*), known as the “silent one” (*ṣāmīṭ*). In the case of the Prophet Muḥammad, ‘Alī was the *waṣī* who interpreted the inner teachings of Islam. Also, the seventh imām in every cycle of history (*dawr*) would ascend to the level of *nāṭiq*, bringing with him a new law and abrogating the earlier one. With the rise of

The importance of number 6 in Ibn Barrajān's thought is often explained in basic arithmetical terms. All numbers derive from an archetypal number (*aṣl al-'adad*). "The Number" at once transcends and generates all numbers. The number 1 is a reflection of that archetypal number, and in turn reflects the infinity of the hereafter. Number 6, for its part, marks the "end of numbers" (*intihā' al-'adad*)¹⁰³ after which there is only repetition:

The archetypal Number "is a sign of the subsistence of that which has a beginning but no end, namely the next world. The [archetypal] Number can only be known by its names [1–10] and acts [addition, subtraction, multiplication, division] to which they are ascribed. For their existence derives from God's name The One (*al-wāḥid*), and its root, The Exclusively One (*al-aḥad*)."¹⁰⁴

Know that "the [archetypal number] one" (*al-wāḥid*) is the matter (*mādda*, or substratum) out of which all numbers are compounded. It is not a number in itself, but rather a number in respect of being the matter [of numbers]. It is among the signs of the True One (*al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq*), for He bestowed existence upon the totality of things while being unlike [that totality], just as all numbers are compounded of 'the one' in number, one upon one upon one that precede it [without "the one" being like the numbers that come from it]. Thus [the one] does not repeat itself nor multiply in respect of its [oneness], but rather it [acquires] plurality and multiplicity by way of fabrication (*ṣun'*), existence of likeness (*wujūd mathal labu*), and ascription (*muḍāf ilayh*). . . thus 2 is a pair (*shaf'*), and 3 is the number (*al-'adad*) because it is compounded of one to one which are joined together as a pair, whose odd is another 1. I mean that 3 generates numbers (*al-thalātha yudawwir al-'adad*) and out of it [numbers] are compounded. And just as the 3 generates the 1 and is compounded from it, so numbers generate from the 3 and are compounded from it in respect of the longing of a 1 for its even then for its odd number. Thus all things come in even and odd numbers. And because of the prevalence of oneness, followed by even numbers, and their odds, the Messenger of God said: "whosoever says at the end of each prayer and upon retiring to his bed 'glory be to God' (*subḥān Allāh*) the number of an even and odd—the pleasant blessed words of my Lord are three—and 'God is greater' (*Allāh akbar*) the number of an even and the

Fāṭimī rule and the unfulfilled anticipations of the Qā'im, Ismā'īlīs allowed for additional seven-fold cycles, or heptads of imāms, with ever-extending continuation. (See Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, pp. 52–53, 211; idem, *The Ismailis*, pp. 131–132, 223.) Interestingly, Ibn Barrajān evokes the language of speaking/silence when he describes the Qur'ān as a "speaking copy" (*nuskha nāṭiqā*) of the Preserved Tablet, in contrast to creation which is a "silent copy" (*nuskha ṣāmīta*). This imagery is another indication of possible, if indirect appropriation of Ismā'īlī doctrines into Sunni mystical discourse (*Īdāḥ*, ¶698–699).

¹⁰³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 524.

¹⁰⁴ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 136. See his reflections on the numerical sequence, *Ibid*, pp. 136–137.

odd—the pleasant blessed words of my Lord are 3—shall have light in his grade and light on the sending forth (*al-ḥashr*) until it enters him into heaven.”¹⁰⁵

Ibn Barraḡān explains that 6 is a perfect number since $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$, just as $1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$, while number 7 recapitulates the wholeness of the six-fold sequence, encapsulating what comes before it in its entirety.¹⁰⁶ He constructs an intricate understanding of the cyclical nature of time (*al-azmān al-dā'ira*) on the basis of number 6.¹⁰⁷ His concept of the 6 great “Days of the Aeon” (*ayyām al-dahr*) is of central importance in this regard.¹⁰⁸ He defines the “Aeon” (*al-dahr*) as the timespan of God’s act (*muddat fi’l Allāh*), in contrast earthly “time” (*zamān*) which is the period of the revolution of a sphere (*muddat dawarān al-falak*). The “Aeon” thus designates the entirety of time, that is, the timespan stretching from the beginning to the end of the cycle of created existence. The Aeon also denotes an intermediate stage between eternity that is outside of time, and temporality. For the six-fold cycle of the Aeon, or the 6 “days of the Aeon,” derive from the Day of Beginninglessness, just as all numbers derive from archetypal number 1.¹⁰⁹ These 6 days of the Aeon are reflected in the 6 days of creation which are concluded by God’s sitting on the throne on the 7th day, as well as the 6 days of the week, where Friday (*jumu’a*, lit. ‘the encompassment’) recapitulates the first.¹¹⁰ In the following passage, Ibn Barraḡān explains how the first and last of the 6 Days of the Aeon are linked to and derived from the eternal Day of Beginninglessness (*yawm al-azal*):

The First Day is the day that was severed from the Day of Beginninglessness (*yawm al-azal*), which has neither beginning nor end. It is the real Aeon (*dahr*) when Books were inscribed, pledges and covenants were taken with the essences bearing witness to them; measures were measured out; and the allotments and shares of provisions, deeds, felicity, and wretchedness were divided up. This day is alluded to by the verse: *Has there come upon man a while of time when he was a thing unremembered?* (Q. 76:1); and by the ḥadīth: verily God measured the measuring of creatures before creating them

¹⁰⁵ *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 109–110. ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 109–110. ¹⁰⁷ *Īdāḥ*, ¶73.

¹⁰⁸ He discusses this in the context of the “Three abodes” (*thalāthat ad’ur*): the abode of this world (*dunyā*); the next world (*ākḥira*); and the isthmus (*barzakḥ*); “Four homesteads” (*mawāṭin*): this world, the isthmus, the court of the day of Arising (*‘arṣat al-qiyāma*), then heaven or hell; and “Five states” (*abwāl*): our precosmic state; the state in this world; the state of the isthmus; the state of the day of Arising; the state of the abode of perpetuity (*khulūd*) in heaven or hell. *Sharḥ*, II, p. 115.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 354–356. Compare with De La Torre’s edition, p. 558.

¹¹⁰ *Īdāḥ*, ¶700; 468; Ibn Barraḡān states: Friday “encompasses” the 6 days of the week, hence the Prophet said: “From one Friday to the next is an expiation for [sins that are committed] before it.” (*Īdāḥ*, ¶468). *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 354–356.

by 50,000 years. The Second Day is the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the aforementioned Day and the Day of the World (*yawm al-dunyā*). It is the first isthmus. It is what is meant by the verse: *We created man of a sperm-drop, to test him* (Q. 76:2). Here, there is a second tablet (*lawḥ*) of the taking of pledges in the loins of fathers, then the book within the bellies of mothers, the fluctuations of the states of creatures and the degrees of natural and innate dispositions. The Third Day is the Day of the World. It is the meaning of the verse *To test him, and We made him hearing, seeing. Surely We guided him upon the way whether he be thankful or disbelieving* (Q. 76:2–3), as well as *Say: The enjoyment of this world is little* (Q. 4:77). The Day of the World is too obvious to warrant further comment. The Fourth Day is the Day between this world and the Day of Arising. It is the isthmus (*barzakh*) between them, i.e., the span between death to the Day of the Blowing of [the Trumpet] of Resurrection (*yawm nafkhat al-nushūr*). The Fifth Day is the Day of Arising, from the blowing of [the trumpet] of resurrection to the final entrance of the people of heaven to their quarters, and the people of hell to theirs.

The Sixth Day is the Day of Perpetuity (*yawm al-khulūd*) and the Day of Permanence in the abode of life of the attainers of the two abodes. It is without end because it joins with the Day of Addition (*yawm al-mazīd*) which is the Day of Gathering (*yawm al-jum‘a*) of all that is [i.e., the completion of the six-fold cycle of cosmic days]. The Day of Addition in heaven derives its “addition” from [the Sixth Day]. Within these 6 days—which are mentioned in the Exalted Qur’ān (*al-qur’ān al-‘azīz*) and in the ḥadīth on the days of the aeon (*ayyām al-dabr*)—the days of the timespans are compounded. They are linked through them to the name of time, and the transforming of transformations, and the fluctuation of determinations from the first of all days, and the engendering of engendered qualities to the day of extinction, then to the day of the great severance, the day of display before the Requirer (*dayyān*), and the breaking up of the gathering into two groups: one group in the blazing flame, and one in the gardens. The future of the Sixth Day connects, as a first, to a seventh which has neither name nor attribute nor beginning nor end in respect of itself. It is rather the coming together of all these aeons and timespans. Its name by way ascription prior to the name of the Days of the Aeon is The First, and after the actualization of the name of perpetuity it is the Addition (*mazīd*). That is the Day which we mean by this expression [“Addition”]. It is unqualified subsistence, perpetuity that is successive, constant and real. [It is] the Everlasting Real, the Living Real, from which all good springs forth on the first day of the aeon, just as all things return and connect to it in the abode of fixedness (*dār al-qarār*), the addition (*mazīd*) of the people of heaven is completed by it, just as it was in His preceding exalted knowledge, or their state before beforeness in the beginning and the beginning of the aeon. It has been said: that is in respect of there being no before nor after in the beginningless beginninglessness.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ibid., II, pp. 115–117. For Ḥadīth references to these 6 days, see *Īdāb*, ¶510. For further references to the symbolic significance of number 6 and the days of the Aeon, see *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 136–137, 354–355.

The Cycle of 1,000 Lunar Months

Ibn Barraġān also ascribes great importance to the cycle of 1,000 lunar months. This cycle is mentioned in Q. 97:3 (al-Qadr). Ibn Barraġān understands *Laylat al-qadr* to mean “The Night of Determination” that is, the night in which all things that will come to be in the following year are measured out and determined. As the Qur’ān puts it, on that blessed night, all affairs that were compact or nondifferentiated (*ḥakīm*, from *muhkam*) in the Preserved Tablet are severed and differentiated (Q. 44:4).¹¹² The Qur’ān also describes the “Night of Determination” as the night when the Qur’ān was revealed as a whole, and as being *greater than* the grand cycle of 1,000 months (Q. 97:3). Ibn Barraġān reads this verse to mean that the cycle of 1,000 lunar months is the measurement of the longest cycle of determination (*dā’irat al-taqdīr*) in relation to which major terrestrial events unfold. Thus he holds that the entire cosmic order is governed by cycles of determination that span 7 days, or multiples of 7 days, or multiples of 1,000 months. In commenting on the Night of Determination, Ibn Barraġān claims boldly that it would have been possible to extrapolate knowledge of the Final Hour (*’ilm al-sā’a*) had God disclosed precisely how much greater than 1,000 months this Night is – that is to say, if God had divulged the exact extent of the Night of Determination’s cycle – as well as the precise date when the Qur’ān descended into this world. In other words, if we were to know exactly how long the 1,000+ month span of the cycle is, and when exactly that cycle started, then it would be possible to trace approximately when that cycle and with it the world would run its term:

Qadr (power or determined length) is an alleviated form of *qadar* (determination), so [the Night of “Power”] is the Night of [Divine] Determination during which divine rulings for the future descend [and are further differentiated] from the Archetypal Book . . . Some of these divine rulings are [to manifest] in the near [future], that is, within the year of that night. . . Others in the distant future [according to longer cycles] . . . and God said that [the Night of Determination] is *better than 1,000 months* (97:3) and 1,000 months are equivalent to 83.33 years, that is 83 years and 4 months. We also know that days are divided into sets of 7, and that when the cycle of [7] days comes to an end, it starts again on day 1 . . . and the last unit in a [seven-fold] cycle is 6, with 7 being the beginning of the subsequent cycle.

Since God revealed the Qur’ān on the Night of Determination, and since He reported to His Messenger that a night will come when the [Qur’ān’s] writing will be erased from scrolls and its memory erased from hearts, we construe

¹¹² *Tanbih*, ed. Mazyadi, V, pp. 101–102.

without a doubt that 7 days of 1,000 months adds up to 7000 months, which equals 583.33 years. It remains to be known which exact year was the Night of Determination in which the Qur'ān was first revealed back to the Prophet, and how much time elapsed between that year and the *Hijra* which was fixed as the first year of the calendar. God said that [the Night of Determination] is *greater than 1,000 months*, and it may be that the specific difference in question is to be extracted from this angle. But the extent contained in that *greatness* (*al-khayr*) is unknowable . . . and thus it is that God concealed the knowledge of the Hour.¹¹³

In the *Īdāh* Ibn Barraġān states allusively that “God divides the affair of the Qur'ān into equal parts in 7 days, each of which is *greater than 1,000 months* . . . but what [amount of time] exactly *greater* refers to remains unknown.”¹¹⁴

III FUTURE PREDICTIONS

Ibn Barraġān is perhaps best remembered for an astounding passage in the *Tanbīh* where he accurately predicts the Muslim recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 583/1187. Remarkably, even before this prediction was realized, his prediction appears to have attracted the attention of several scholars. The contemporary Egyptian belle-lettrist 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Nāġir al-Sadīd (d. 537/1142) believed that, with an accurate comprehension of his work, one could extrapolate (*yustakbraj*) all events up to the day of resurrection.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the Damascene Shāfi'ī judge and belletrist Muḥyī al-Dīn b. Zakī (b. 550/1155–d. 598/1202), who was appointed by Saladin as judge and governor over Aleppo in 579/1183, was also convinced by Ibn Barraġān's theory of cycles and divinatory abilities. During the celebrations of Saladin's capture of Aleppo on Ṣafar 18th, 579/June 11th, 1183, Ibn Zakī recited a poem in front of Saladin, rhyming in Bā'.¹¹⁶ One verse of the poem reads:

Your conquest of the Resplendent Fort [of Aleppo] in [the month of] Ṣafar
Heralds your conquest of Jerusalem in [the month] of Rajab!

When Ibn Zakī was asked about the source of this prognostication, he responded: “I took it from Ibn Barraġān's commentary on Q. 30:1–3.” Four years later, Saladin captured the city of Jerusalem in Rajab, 583/1187,

¹¹³ Ibid., V, pp. 524–525. ¹¹⁴ *Īdāh*, ¶1123.

¹¹⁵ Goldziher, “Ibn Barraġān,” p. 546. See Suyūṭī, *Bughyat*, II, p. 90, nr. 1514.

¹¹⁶ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXI, pp. 358–360; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, pp. 229–236, nr. 594; Muqaddasī, *Uyūn*, II, p. 106.

and the same Ibn Zakī was selected to deliver the first Friday sermon in Jerusalem in the presence of Saladin.¹¹⁷

Ibn Barraġān's posthumous prediction is based on a fairly simple mathematical calculation. I maintain the historicity of Ibn Barraġān's Jerusalem prediction despite the fact that there are no extant pre-583/1187 manuscript copies. For the *simplicity* of his calculation, combined with the fact that the prediction is so perfectly rooted in his cosmology and theory of cycles,¹¹⁸ and complemented moreover by several passages from other parts of the *Tanbīh*, the *Īdāb* and the *Sharḥ*, defies the possibility of scribal forgery. What is important about the prediction, for our purposes, is that its realization reinforced the epistemological claims of mystics and gave the *Tanbīh* a legendary quality in the eyes of many medieval scholars who continued to recopy it until at least 1129/1716.¹¹⁹

Ibn Barraġān's prediction emerged out of the context of sixth-/twelfth-century geopolitics. Many are reported to have had intuitions about or made predictions of the recapture of Jerusalem.¹²⁰ Andalusīs were particularly shaken by the rampages of the crusaders in the East, and felt a vicarious connection with their victims. Andalusīs viewed themselves as involved in a parallel religiopolitical struggle against the forces of the Christian Reconquista.¹²¹ It is perhaps for this reason that Jerusalem occupies such a place of privilege in Ibn Barraġān's religious imagination. He comments on its significance as the site of the supreme self-disclosure

¹¹⁷ Ibn Khallikān, who reported this incident in his *Wafayāt*, states that he consulted Ibn Barraġān's tafsīr but found it recorded along the margins in a second hand. In MS Murad Molla, a copy of the *Īdāb*, the marginal notes are a summary of the *Tanbīh* commentary on sūra 30 that were copied in red ink most likely after the prediction became famous after 583/1187. Ibn Khallikān and other medieval scholars questioned the authenticity of this prediction as a retrospective scribal forgery. Ibn Khallikān assumed that Ibn Barraġān wrote only one tafsīr, and happened upon a copy of the *Īdāb*, not the *Tanbīh*. MS Murad Molla. See Böwering and Casewit's introduction to the *Īdāb*, p. 28.

¹¹⁸ The Jerusalem Prediction cannot be fully appreciated and understood without an understanding of all the major doctrines discussed in this chapter. Specifically, it presumes an apprehension of his conception of the cycles of determination (*dawā'ir al-taqdīr*), cycles of time (*dawā'ir al-zamān*), the symbolic significance of the number 6, the cycle of 1,000 lunar months, and the fixity, synchronicity, and measurability of the lengths of the cycles.

¹¹⁹ Exegetes who cite Ibn Barraġān's Jerusalem prediction include Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī*, I, pp. 9, 105; XI, p. 22; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, VII, p. 327; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr*, VII, p. 375; XI, p. 340; Khomeini, *Tafsīr*, II, p. 298.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of predictions and premonitory dreams about the recapture of Jerusalem, see Bellver, "Ibn Barraġān and Ibn 'Arabī," pp. 257–258; and Eddé, *Saladin*, pp. 208–209.

¹²¹ Bennison, "Liminal states," p. 14.

(*al-tajallī al-‘alī*) on Judgment Day when all of humanity shall be brought forth (*hashr*). He believes that Jerusalem is singled out as a blessed and holy city in the Qur’ān (Q. 5:21, 17:1) for this reason.¹²²

It should be recalled that Ibn Barraġān’s predecessor, Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ru‘aynī (see Chapter 2), also claimed to possess powers of predicting the future in the early fifth/eleventh century.¹²³ However, despite his reputation, predictions of the cosmos are secondary to Ibn Barraġān’s exegetical project as a whole. Above all else, Ibn Barraġān pondered the cycles of God’s determinations (*dawā’ir al-taqdīr*) in order to attain certainty and wisdom. He insisted that pondering God’s cycles of determination and the cyclical revolution of the spheres is the most effective means of attaining wisdom and certainty. For these cycles are clear denotations (*dalālāt*) of divine oneness (*waḥdāniyya*)¹²⁴ that anticipate the coming of the final hour, the fulfillment of all appointed terms, resurrection, the promise of paradise, and the threat of hell.¹²⁵

Ibn Barraġān’s divination is predicated on the synchronicity, proportionality, and fixity of the cycles (*dawā’ir muḥkama*). For him, the periods of the revolution of the cycles of determination are fixed and measurable, and they give rise to calculable and predictable historical patterns. In almost mechanistic terms, he describes the quantifiable and hence calculable cycles of determination. He begins with his understanding of the cyclical nature of time and divine decree, and then imposes that framework on historical data. For since all events run along firmly fixed cycles of determination, every event foreshadows a future event.¹²⁶

Ibn Barraġān concedes that peering into the future is a supernatural “break from the habitual” (*kharq al-‘āda*) for some. It is not illicit, however, since that which is unseen for some is visible for others. He also finds ample scriptural attestation for the possibility of gaining insight into the future. To begin with, the Qur’ān affirms in multiple places, including sūra 12 (Yūsuf), that God grants knowledge of future events to His favored servants. For instance, God tells the Prophet Joseph

¹²² *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 228.

¹²³ Fierro, “Polémicas,” in *Historia de España: Los Reinos de Taifas, al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, ed. Menenez Pidal, t. VIII, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994; p. 424.

¹²⁴ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 383.

¹²⁵ Ibn Barraġān reiterates this point repeatedly in his writings. See e.g., *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 325–328, 569; V, p. 111.

¹²⁶ *Idāb*, ¶640.

of an incident that would take place later in the story, that *Thou shalt tell them of this their doing when they are unaware* (12:15).¹²⁷ Moreover, the idea of “*tawassum*,” (“discerning signs”) in the verse, *Surely, in that are portents for those who discern the signs (mutawassimīn)* (Q. 15:75), is taken by Ibn Barraġān and other exegetes to mean “prescience,” “perspicacity” (*firāsa*), or an insight into the unseen that takes hold of the heart of the believer. Ibn Barraġān also cites a ḥadīth in which the Prophet reportedly states: “Beware of the perspicacity (*firāsa*) of the believer, for he sees with the light of God.”¹²⁸ Finally, in a widely documented report, the second caliph, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), the paragon of perspicacious believers, had a vision of the unseen during one of his Friday sermons in Medina.¹²⁹ Ibn Barraġān takes these reports to mean that while only God has knowledge of the unseen, He bestows part of that knowledge upon His servant.¹³⁰ Knowing the cycles certainly helps, but knowledge of the future is strictly contingent upon unveiling (*kashf*), and is similar to intuitive foresight (*ḥads*), eager desire (*birṣ*), and speculation (*taẓannun*), and cannot be verified (*taḥqīq*).¹³¹

Ibn Barraġān was neither an astrologer nor a practitioner of the science of letters. His calculation is based on his understanding of the cycles of determination, not a numerical calculation of the letters as may be inferred mistakenly from Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussions of the prediction.¹³² He did not extract knowledge of future events from the location of the stars. He consciously disassociated himself from the astrological tradition (sing. *munajjim*)¹³³ and soothsayers (sing. *kāhin*)¹³⁴ who predict, usually with inaccuracy, terrestrial events from the configuration of the planets and stars.¹³⁵ He states,

Whoever aspires to gain some knowledge of this type, let him seek it from this [legitimate] approach, and let him not fabricate lies about God’s command, for

¹²⁷ Jacob (Ya‘qūb), the father of Joseph (Yūsuf), is granted knowledge of prophecy and had foreknowledge of the final outcome of his family trial. See *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, p. 87.

¹²⁸ Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, #3127.

¹²⁹ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, III, pp. 113–114. ‘Umar’s anecdote is known as “Sāriyat al-jabal.” See Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, XX, pp. 25–28.

¹³⁰ *Īdāb*, ¶197. ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, ¶936–937.

¹³² See Bellver’s treatment and translation of these passages in “Ibn Barraġān and Ibn ‘Arabī,” pp. 283–286.

¹³³ *Īdāb*, ¶281, 939. ¹³⁴ *Sharḥ*, I, p. 385.

¹³⁵ Andalusī astrologers include Ibn al-Khayyāt (d. 447/1055), ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Khalaf al-Istijjī, and Abū al-Futūḥ Thābit b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 431/1040) who was put to death on account of one of them (Fierro, “Polémicas,” p. 442).

whoever ascribes something of God's command to someone else has disbelieved.¹³⁶

Ibn Barraĵān occasionally describes the spheres as intermediary causes. He mostly discusses them as signs of God's command, thereby ascribing a correlative, not causal relationship between the revolution of the spheres and events in the herebelow.¹³⁷ His entire thought-system, in fact, is based on correlationality, not causality, between parallel worlds. For "The spheres revolve by God's permission, giving news of the unseen (*tukhbir 'an ghayb*)."¹³⁸ Moreover, he rebukes philosophers for ascribing the attributes of knowledge, life, will, and intellect to the spheres. The followers of revelation, for their part,

Hold that [the spheres] live by the "life" of submission and faith, and are subjected to God's subjugation of them. As God says: *and the sun, and the moon, and the stars subservient, by His command. Verily, His are the creation and the command.* (Q. 7:54).¹³⁹

Thus, the movement of the celestial bodies are not causes, but contingent signs of God's command.

Ibn Barraĵān tenders a Qur'ānic hermeneutic for probing into the future based on simple calculations of natural cycles that he found described in scripture and observed in nature and in the cosmos. He explains that foretelling the future is simply a parsing out of the contents imbedded in the all-comprehensive Qur'ān by tracing the arc of the cycle of divine determination and studying its movements and properties. This process of "parsing out" entails pondering the Qur'ān and God's habit and custom in creation, deciphering the requirements of His names and attributes, and thereby "reading" the contents of the Preserved Tablet.¹⁴⁰ In his words:

Knowers of God take their guidance from the book of their Lord which was descended upon them, and from the Preserved Tablet through [cosmic] existence and the revealed book.¹⁴¹

No future prediction is possible without the all-encompassing Qur'ān. Ibn Barraĵān makes the simple point that only God possesses exact knowledge of such unseen things as the Hour, the recompense, and eschatological consequences of human actions. But the Mu'tabirūn who are *firmly rooted in knowledge* (Q. 3:7) "possess a share of knowledge taught to

¹³⁶ *Īdāh*, ¶936–937. ¹³⁷ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 17. ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, III, p. 166.

¹³⁹ *Sharḥ*, I, pp. 307–309.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p. 286. For a similar discussion, see *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, p. 342.

¹⁴¹ *Sharḥ*, II, p. 286.

them by God, and in that knowledge they are ranked in degrees and they say, 'We believe in it; all is from our Lord;' yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds. (Q. 3:7)"¹⁴²:

As for reporting the unseen realms and giving news of what has yet to take place, no one is capable of anything beyond that *forbidden barrier* (Q. 25:22) and obstructed obstruction. How could it be when restriction encompasses it from every direction, and inimitability blocks whoever attempts this task with every type of inimitability found in the Tremendous Qur'ān . . . Say: 'If men and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they would never produce its like, even if they backed one another.' (Q. 17:88)¹⁴³

The Qur'ān, however, is replete with future predictions which are both explicit (as with sūra 30, al-Rūm) or implicit and in need of being parsed out by a qualified scholar, since the Qur'ān is an unfolding of the Preserved Tablet. That is, the only possible way to peer into the unseen is to parse out, or unpack (*tafsīl*) the compact meanings already contained in the Qur'ān.¹⁴⁴ Man has access to the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet since, like the Qur'ān, he is created in the form of the Tablet:

In reality, the Preserved Tablet is none other than [a symbol of] what is required by God's names, attributes, acts, command, and prohibition. He bestowed existence upon it in His servant Adam by way of remembrance and knowledge, and He places it within His mighty prophets as an inheritance which He hid within them, and then made them testify to it with conviction, then He configured it in them after that by giving them existence, and He enlivened it in them by faith, and expanded it over their tongues by clarification, distinguished it in them..by guidance and discernment, whereby the believer testifies to its truth by faith and binds it [to himself] by remembrance, through the seed of divine knowledge in his heart . . . so the doors open, and He ascends in the causes, and continues in this manner until his thought encompasses the quarters of the earth and fills the horizons, penetrating the seven layers, attaining the noble footstool, arriving at the mighty throne, then he witnesses the world of dominion and opens the veils of the world of invincibility (*jabarūt*), unifying in the highest union, and the greatest election, arriving at the furthest limit, and his heart ascends to the supreme locus.¹⁴⁵

The Jerusalem Prediction

Ibn Barrajan witnessed cycles of determination in all events, including military victories and defeats of the Muslim community.¹⁴⁶ He predicted that Muslims would recapture Jerusalem from the Crusades in the year

¹⁴² *Īdāb*, ¶197. ¹⁴³ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, I, pp. 162–163. ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 162.

¹⁴⁵ *Sharḥ*, II, pp. 61–62. ¹⁴⁶ *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, V, p. 122.

583AH on the basis of an analysis of the opening verses of sūra 30 (Rūm) that he penned in 522/1128 when Jerusalem was still under Christian control. The prediction is found in the *Tanbih*, with supplementary comments in the *Īdāh*.

Ibn Barrajān begins by a critical appraisal of the widely accepted interpretation of Q. 30:1–6 concerning the victory of the Byzantines (Rūm, Q 30:3) over the Persians as the cause of rejoicing for the Muslims (*on that day the believers will rejoice*). Exegetes typically explain that the Muslims favored a Christian victory since they felt a bond of kinship with the latter, being People of the Book as well. Ibn Barrajān offers a new narrative, and states that Muslims would only rejoice by a victory over the Christians, and proceeds to shed new light on the passage from this perspective. Given that Christians now occupied the area of Jerusalem once more, Ibn Barrajān insists that a future victory over Christians in Jerusalem would fulfill the promise of Q. 30:4.

Ibn Barrajān explains that the Qurʾānic passage 30:2–4 has two vocalizations which alter its meaning. The first is the “majority” reading, which vocalizes the verse as follows: *The Byzantines were defeated (ghulibat) in the lands close-by; and they, after their defeat shall win within a few years*. They understand this verse to have been revealed post-614 in Mecca after the defeat of the Byzantines to the Sassanians, and to foretell of the forthcoming Byzantine victory over the Sasanians in a *few* (*bidʿ* = 3–9) years. At the time, the Persians under Chosroes had initiated a series of campaigns against the Byzantines which culminated in their defeat at the battle of Antioch in 613, followed by the fall of Damascus in 613, and Jerusalem in 614 where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was demolished and the Holy Cross seized. The Byzantines also lost Egypt in 619. The Byzantine leader Heraclius was at a disadvantage in relation to Sassanians because he was fighting a two-front war. So he signed a peace treaty with the Avars in 619 and in the spring of 622 subjugated the Sassanians at the Battle of Issus in 622, then decisively at Nineveh in 627. The majority reading of 30:2–4 therefore predicts the forthcoming victory of the Byzantines over the Sasanians in a *few* (*bidʿ* = 3–9) years.

The alternative “minority” reading of 30:2–4 vocalizes the verse as follows: *The Byzantines have won (ghalabat) in the lands close-by; and they, after their victory shall lose within a few years*. Those who ascribe to this variant reading hold that the verse was revealed at the battle of Badr in year 624 after the Muslims were heartened by the news that their fellow People of the Book, the Byzantines, defeated the Sasanians at Battle of Issus in 624, which was followed by their decisive victory at

Nineveh in 627. According to this reading of the verse, the Qur'ān foreshadows 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's (r. 13–23/634–44) conquest of the Byzantine-controlled towns in Syro-Palestine at the Battle of Yarmūk in 636, that is, 9–12 years after the revelation.

Ibn Barraḡān is unique in giving equal weight to both variants. But he only bases his prognostication on the Meccan dating of the revelation around 614. He never entertains the idea that the alternative reading of 30:2–4 must have been revealed *circa* 624. It is neither historically nor mathematically tenable that both the majority (614) and the alternative reading (624) could have been revealed at the same time. Nevertheless, if we follow Ibn Barraḡān's back-to-the-future vein of thought, he subtracts the majority reading date (614) from the date of 'Umar's conquest (636) which gives 22. The result 22 falls outside of 3–9 (*biḡ'*), but according to his astrological scheme, a Qur'ānic “*year*” can mean either 1 standard lunar year, or a multiple of 7 lunar years, or even a multiple of 1,000 lunar months (more on this later). So 'Umar's victory, 22 years after the revelation, fell within *a few years/units* timeframe i.e., between “*a few* (3–9)” multiples of 7: 21 and 28.

Up to this point Ibn Barraḡān has made only retrospective calculations of past events. He maintains that 30:2–4 promises two victories for the Byzantines (their first being the victory of 624 over the Sassanians, and the second the Crusader victory of 489/1095). As for the Muslims' two victories, their first was 'Umar's back in year 15 AH/636 CE, and the second was yet to come. His prediction of the second Muslim victory hinges on equating each of the annual units mentioned in the verse *within a few years* with 1,000 lunar months. That is to say, Muslims *shall win within a few* “1,000 lunar months.” With this new unit in mind, Ibn Barraḡān reasons that the Crusaders were granted their second victory over the Muslims in 489/1095, which approximates the end of the 6,000th lunar month after the hijra, i.e., year 500/1107. Ibn Barraḡān prophesizes that the tables would turn in favor of the Muslims when the grand cycle of 7000 lunar months comes to a close. So at the 7000th lunar month, i.e., year 583 and a third, or 1st of Jumādā I, 583/ July 1187 the Muslim victory would take place. Remarkably, the battle of Haṭṭin in which the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem fell to Saladin happened almost exactly 1,000 lunar months (or 83.33 lunar years) after the year 500/1107. To be exact, it took place 6 days prior to Ibn Barraḡān's estimation, on Saturday 25th Rabī' II, 583/July 4th, 1187.

It is clear that Ibn Barraḡān held his calculation to be a rough approximation, as evidenced by the fact that he identified the second Byzantine

victory (of the Crusaders) with the rounded-up year of 500 AH, knowing that it took place in 489 AH. The first Crusader victory was long a process which unfolded over the course of several years, beginning with the first clash of the Crusaders with the Muslims in the mid-490/1096 in Asia Minor, which delayed the Crusaders for almost a year at the siege of Antioch, ending in their first great triumph over the Muslims in Jumādā I 491/April–May 1098. Jerusalem itself was only captured by the Crusaders in mid-492/1099.¹⁴⁷

Translation of the Jerusalem Prediction¹⁴⁸

The Byzantines were defeated (ghulibat) in the lands close-by; and they, after their defeat (ghalabihim) shall win (sayaghibūna) within a few years (Q. 30: 2–4). The majority hold that the first verb is passive (i.e. *ghulibat* “they were defeated”), whereas ‘Alī and Ibn ‘Umar read it in the active as *they have won* (*ghalabat*). Ibn ‘Umar reads *ghalabihim* (their defeat) as *ghulbihim*, although the common reading has been ascribed to him as well. The majority who read *ghulibat* in the passive read [the rest of the verse] in the active as *and they, after their defeat shall win*. Whereas those who read [the first] in the active as “they have won” (*ghalabat*) read [the second verb] in the passive as *they shall lose* (*sayughlabūna*).

God’s wisdom in the cycles of determination (*dawā’ir al-taqdīr*) involves the return of things to their initial state. These cycles include both those whose timeframe is circumscribed (*muqaddara*) and those whose timeframe is much larger (*muwassa’a*), according to what God wills for them and through them. Now—according to the reading by the majority of the first verb in the passive *ghulibat* “they were defeated”—when God reported that the Byzantines were defeated *in the lands close-by*, i.e., Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*), He was reporting about what would transpire in the future, and announcing good tidings to the Messenger of God and the believers [that the Byzantines would eventually win the Persians].

Thus the Prophet said upon waking one night, “*The is no god but God! Woe to the Arabs from an evil that has drawn nigh! Today the rampart [which impedes] Gog and Magog has been opened like this,*” and [the Prophet gestured by] making a circle with his thumb and forefinger.¹⁴⁹

Thus God was informing his Prophet what would transpire, and this [looming evil predicted by the Prophet] took place less than two hundred years later with the

¹⁴⁷ Personal correspondence with Frank Griffel, April 14, 2012.

¹⁴⁸ In translating this passage from the *Tanbīh* I collated from the following sources: (1) ‘Adlūnī’s incomplete edition which is based on München 83 (*al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfī li-l-qur’ān*, I, pp. 394–397); (2) *Tanbīh*, ed. Mazyadī, IV, pp. 322–327; (3) MS Yusuf Aḡa 4746, 108b–110a; (4) A reproduction of the passage in marginalia around *Īdāh* MS. Murat Molla 35 fl. 186a–188a.

¹⁴⁹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #3346, #7135; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #2880.

emergence of the [Arab] ‘Abbāsī dynasty [in 139/750] who employed Khurāsānīs, Turks, Daylamīs and other foreigners of those areas. [But let me clarify in passing that] the actual barrier (*sudd*) [which impedes the devastating forces of Gog and Magog] will not be breached until the coming of God’s promise [as stated in verses Q. 18:97–99.] Thus the Prophet did not downplay the importance of the opening because the employment of [Byzantine foreigners] by the [Arab] ‘Abbāsīs was so to speak an opening [for those Byzantine foreigners in that they displaced Arab ‘Abbāsī forces]. For when the Arabs turned away [from God], He replaced them with the [Byzantine] foreigners: *If you turn away, He will substitute another people instead of you, and they will not be like you* (Q. 47:38).

When the Prophet said *Woe to the Arabs from an evil that has drawn nigh*, he was a warning them that their political and military authority would be seized by [Byzantine] foreigners. He was also reporting about when God’s determination would come into effect, for [God’s determination] preceded engendered existence. And the determination of such [an eventuality took effect] that night, as may be gathered from the Prophet’s statement *tonight a breach was opened* [in the barrier]. And God knows best.

Likewise, the verse *the Byzantines were defeated* is a good tidings announcing the forthcoming unfolding of the predestined determination. This [good tidings] came to pass at the time of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44) who conquered the towns of Syro-Palestine and captured Jerusalem from the Byzantines [ca. 636]. God said *within a ‘few’ years* (biḍ’ sinīn), that is between three and nine. Now this sūra (Rūm 30) was revealed in Mecca [ca. 614], and ‘Umar’s conquests took place within a few multiples of 7 years, that is 20 to 28 years later [that is between 636–642, the Battle of Yarmūk being in 636]. Thereafter the conquest continued to expand and assumed the dimensions that had been willed by divine determination.

He next says, *And they the Byzantines after their defeat shall win*; that is to say they lost [‘Umar in 636], then they shall win [in 1096 with the First Crusade], and after winning shall lose again [in 1187 at the hands of Saladin]. By this God announces the property (*ḥukm*) of [His] determinations’ cycles: that the Byzantines will have two victories and the Muslims will have two victories equally, not counting the first victory for the Muslims at the hands of the blessed Companions.

The first victory of the [Byzantines] over us in those *lands* corresponds to the Companions’ victory within the timeframe of 49 or 50 multiples of 7, i.e., 7 weeks multiplied by 7 weeks, and contained within the timeframe [defined by the verse, namely] 7×9 . And this first [Byzantine] victory only encompassed the fortified outposts of Syro-Palestine, and afterwards Muslims had the upper hand and wrested from them what they had captured, also taking control of Armenia.

Then Byzantines were granted a second victory in the year 489/1096 [of the First Crusade] taking Syro-Palestine in its entirety, including Jerusalem [in 492/1099]. This [Byzantine victory] took place at the end of the sixth “year”—with year here being defined as 1,000 lunar months, thereby confirming [God’s prediction of Byzantines’ second victory] “*within a few years*” [since otherwise the phrase could only refer to events within ten normal years of its revelation at most]. [In this scenario, then], the 6th “day” of [within a few years] constitutes

the beginning of the year 500/1106–7, with 7 of such “years” equaling the year 583 and 4 months [Rabi’ II, 583/ July 1187], and we are now in year 522/1128.¹⁵⁰

The second reading [of this passage] furnishes a different proof, since in the view of all the scholars this [second reading] represents an authoritative variant reading that is equal to the first with respect to its function as a binding source of proof, a basis for recitation, and an object of belief. [Thus] the verse *The Byzantines have won (ghalabat) in the land close-by; and after their victory they shall lose within in a few years*, [with the first verb] in the active, announces the defeat of the Muslims within the timeframe of 49 weeks. God then proceeds to speak of our subsequent victory over them, and I have already mentioned our victory over the Byzantines as per the property of the cycles of determination.

He then says, *And after their victory* i.e. over the Muslims, *they shall lose*. That is, the cycle will turn against the Byzantines just as it had before turned in their favor. The Byzantines won over us a second time in [the Crusade of] 489/1096, and still the holy promise that *they shall lose* remains [to be fulfilled]. This will be the third of three [take-overs to date]: the first being the Companions’ victory over them, the second being their present victory over us [which began 489/1096], although the scope of the first of these was not so extensive. The condition of their [dominion] during the period in which the Qur’ān was revealed and the Prophet was active in Mecca was a sixth condition.

Whoso contemplates (*tadabbur*) the cycles of determination as reflected in the difference between night and day, and in the transformations of the ages and the vicissitudes of temporal beings in the changing of their states in respect of conquests [in which territory is both] gained and lost, may well obtain some knowledge thereof. From this [contemplative exercise] one gains some of the most beneficial lessons in certitude of the termination of time, the expiration of fixed terms, the ineluctable advent of the Last Day, the realization of the knowledge of resurrection, of the promise and the threat, and beyond.

However, on the basis of the reading *they shall win* in the active (*sayagh-libūn*), i.e., that the Byzantines will have victory over the Muslims *within a few years*, it is possible to take the verse as meaning ‘in a few multiples of seven years,’ as was discussed above. Whereas the reading of the verb in the passive (*sayughlabūn*) would denote that *they shall be defeated within a few years*.

The Prophet said concerning the Mahdī: *He will fill the earth with justice and equity, even as it was filled with injustice and oppression; he will live among you seven years* (or as another version has it, *nine years*).¹⁵¹ This ḥadīth announces our

¹⁵⁰ The incomplete manuscript in Munich (Cod. Ar. 83) which ‘Adlūnī used for his edition adds “and we are 522.” This may be a scribal addition, but it matters little since MS Fayzullah Efendi 35 f. 388 confirms that “the *Irsbād*” (i.e., *Tanbīh*) was completed in 522/1128.

¹⁵¹ This ḥadīth has a weak *isnād*. It is cited in Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, #4287; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, #11130, 11326.

future victory over them, since we will have the upper hand and they will be on the retreat without chance of a retaliation on that day, God willing. What has just been discussed is beyond doubt, so praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. Thus the verse *The Byzantines have won in the lands close-by, and after their victory, i.e., their second victory, they shall be defeated within a few years* announces the Muslims' victory over them under the command of the just leader [the Mahdi], may God be pleased with us and them. Prophetic reports have confirmed this, and God is the One besought.

The verse continues, *God's is the command, before and after; and on that day shall the believers rejoice in God's help* (Q. 30:4–5). God announces eventualities for and against this community by way of entanglements with the Byzantines. He alludes to the approach of the Byzantines' demise as the final outcome of these entanglements—this being the victory of the Muslims over them through the leadership of the foretold imām, also known as the [great] slaughter—by saying *God's is the command, before and after; and on that day shall the believers rejoice in God's help*—this day refers to the appearance of none other than the damned Antichrist followed by the appearance of His Word, His servant, His messenger Jesus, son of Mary, [who will join battle against him], then the disappearance of the righteous [from the face of the earth], then the Last Hour. God's is the command before the descent of the Qur'ān and after these times are fulfilled. Indeed, God's was the command before existence was bestowed upon creation and will continue to be so after [creation's] demise; as He says, *On that day shall the command belongs to God* (Q. 82:19), and *On that day shall the kingdom, the true [kingdom] belong to the Merciful* (Q. 25:26).

The verse continues, *And on that day shall the believers rejoice in God's help*. Here lies the evident proof that what I have here discussed is in fact what is intended by this verse, contrary to those commentators who assert that it refers to the Persians' victory over the Byzantines and the Byzantines' victory over the Persians. If this were the case, then the purpose of this verse would not be to announce the outcome of the Byzantine-Persian struggle, nor the victory of the Persians over the Byzantines, nor of the Byzantines over the Persians. God would not announce such tidings to the believers, nor reveal this in His holy book, nor communicate this in His mighty word; since such information would not be occasion for taking heed, nor for an admonition, nor would it be a good tidings to the believers.

This is despite the fact that in their attempt to prove their purported interpretation, these commentators assert that the believers inclined toward the Byzantines because they too possess a revealed scripture. But this does not fit with God's promise to His faithful servants [in the next verse]: *The promise of God! God fails not His promise, but most men do not know it* (Q. 30:6). For after rejecting Muḥammad's calling to Islam, the Byzantines were no longer the object of divine mercy referred to in the previous verse [*and on that day the believers shall rejoice in God's help; God helps whomsoever He will*] and *He is the Mighty, the Merciful*. (Q. 30:4–5). It is on account of God's surpassing wisdom that the Byzantines are made to prevail over others and vice versa: *and thus do We give some oppressors dominance over others according to what they have earned*. (Q. 6:129). God

always expresses His vengeance through His name *the Mighty*, and His prevailing mercy toward the believers through His name *the Merciful*. All this negates what these commentators have mentioned; for the good tidings and mercy are for the Muslim believers only, and the threats, censure and reproach are for the rest—so understand.

Conclusion

Andalusī mysticism during the sixth/twelfth century was virtually a world unto itself. This fact is best illustrated by the original writings of Abū al-Ḥakam b. Barrajan, a towering Sevilan mystic and Qurʾān exegete who remains a discrete and underappreciated thinker in the history of Islamic thought. Ibn Barrajan was driven by a core mystical intuition that was both unpretentiously straightforward and radically transformative. He was convinced that pitting the “herebelow” (*dunyā*) against the “hereafter” (*ākhirā*) is ultimately an illusory dichotomy, since the visible world is not an ontologically independent order of reality but rather is subsumed in the next world, here and now. He came to realize that the line of demarcation between the visible world (*ʿālam al-shahāda*) and the invisible realm (*al-ghayb*) is unreal and attempted to bridge the chasm that separates the two worlds by means of the contemplative crossing (*iʿtibār*).

Ibn Barrajan was a prolific author whose extant works span eight volumes in modern print. They consist of a broad-ranging treatment of key metaphysical, mystical, cosmological, exegetical, theological, and soteriological teachings drawn from an array of sources and disciplines and centered on *iʿtibār*. His teachings, which formed part and parcel of the intellectual universe out of which the seminal seventh-/thirteenth-century Andalusī and Maghribī exponents of Philosophical Sufism emerged, have often been interpreted through the prescriptive lens of those very figures. One of the key objectives of this study has been to interrogate the complex ways in which Ibn Barrajan perceived of his own place within the Islamic tradition, and to explore how he navigated, negotiated, and challenged the dominant hermeneutical, mystical, and

exegetical paradigms of sixth-/twelfth-century Islamic thought by reconciling and synthesizing his cosmological worldview with an intimate reading of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and the Bible.

WHY DID IBN BARRAJĀN CHOOSE THE DIVINE NAMES
TRADITION AND QUR'ĀNIC EXEGESIS TO EXPRESS
HIS TEACHINGS?

Ibn Barraĵān expressed his teachings primarily through two genres of religious literature: the divine names tradition and Qur'ānic exegesis. Like many mystically minded scholars in medieval Islam, he recognized that these two fields can be cultivated individually and independently of political institutions. They tend to fall outside the realm of formal legal scholarship, and are developed independently of the power of the dominating scholarly class of 'ulamā'.¹ These genres, moreover, are typically undertaken for the purpose of reflection (*tadabbur*) rather than legal extraction of rulings (*istinbāṭ al-ahkām*). They allow for a certain methodological leniency (*tasāhul*) and lack a unifying methodological framework. A famous ḥadīth invites believers to “reckon” (*iḥṣā'*) the divine names as a door to entering paradise,² while the Qur'ān itself repeatedly demands its reader to reflect upon its verses: *do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān, or have the hearts locks upon them?* (Q. 47:24). Ibn Barraĵān was attracted to these two bodies of literature because they are not a priori the site of legal prescription of commands and prohibitions (*tashrī'*). These two flexible genres enabled him to expound upon his mystical teachings in a religiously authoritative tone and in a way that other genres, such as Ash'arī theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legal theory (*uṣūl*), and Ḥadīth, could never afford him.

RETHINKING EXEGESIS VERSUS EISEGESIS

Commentaries on the divine names and on the Qur'ān generally tend to draw from a broad range of undisclosed sources, and are moreover addressed to a readership that does not expect rigorous citations. Therefore, pinpointing the extent to which a school of thought or a figure influenced a broadly trained scholar such as Ibn Barraĵān is no

¹ Saleh, “Quranic Commentaries,” p. 1645. Saleh's remarks on tafsīr can be equally extended to the divine names tradition.

² Bukhārī, #6410, #7390; Muslim, #2677.

easy task. As a general principle, I employ the term “influence” with caution. For in addition to the countless undisclosed sources that Ibn Barraġān used, the term “in-fluence” falsely implies the smooth transport of ideas from one intellectual world to another.

Despite the undeniable Neoplatonic and occasional Ismā‘īlī precedents to Ibn Barraġān’s works, to speak of direct “influence” of these traditions upon Ibn Barraġān is reductive. For it overlooks and oversimplifies the critical and selective process of adaptation, appropriation, and naturalization of Neoplatonic categories and concepts from one world to another. The term “influence,” moreover, fails to capture Ibn Barraġān’s profoundly symbiotic relationship with the text of the Qur’ān. He was not merely a Muslim Neoplatonist, nor a proto-Ismā‘īlī clothed in the garb of Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. He did not see himself as repackaging Neoplatonism, the teachings of the Brethren, or Ismā‘īlism for a Sunnī Andalusī audience. His writings are certainly enriched by the writings of Muslim philosophers, the Brethren, and perhaps indirect Ismā‘īlī contact, but he makes no reference to these works.³

Assuming that Ibn Barraġān did read works of Neoplatonist thinkers (certainly parts of the *Rasā’il*), he would not have read them *qua* Neoplatonic treatises but as sources of wisdom that serve to parse out the teachings of the Qur’ān. For him, Qur’ānic truth is universal, just as universal truth is Qur’ānic. Any teaching that struck him as being true and in alignment with his Qur’ānicly infused worldview further substantiated his point and aided him in his quest for *i’tibār*. It is thus important to privilege the categories that Ibn Barraġān himself privileges. He was a Qur’ānic thinker and a Mu‘tabir by his own estimation, and he held the empirical self-knowledge that he acquired through *i’tibār* to be the supreme religious experience.

To restate the point just made, Ibn Barraġān can be described as promulgating a Neoplatonic interpretation of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, just as he may be described as promulgating a Qur’ānic reading of Neoplatonic thought. Or again, he may be portrayed as representing an early “Qur’ānization” of the Neoplatonized writings of the Brethren in a Sunnī mystical context in al-Andalus. By the same token, his writings demonstrate that the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth operate as saturated texts whose meanings are inexhaustible. When read literally and holistically, they lend

³ He never cites the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, a paraphrased rendition of parts of Plotinus’ (d. 270) *Enneads*, nor the *Rasā’il* of the Brethren, nor Ismā‘īlī works of Sijistānī and Kirmānī.

themselves to the Neoplatonized doctrines espoused by the Brethren. In engaging with a Neoplatonized cosmological worldview, Ibn Barraġān dismisses various teachings on Qur'ānic grounds, and reinterprets Qur'ānic passages in Neoplatonic light. This symbiotic and simultaneous process of Qur'ānization and Neoplatonization was, moreover, continued by Ibn 'Arabī and his followers. Thus, to truly appreciate Ibn Barraġān's hermeneutics is to resist the urge to draw a clear line between "exe-geſis" (deriving meanings *from* scripture) and "eise-geſis" (reading meanings *into* scripture). For in the final analysis, this line is neither entirely possible to demarcate nor even helpful in furthering our understanding of how authors such as Ibn Barraġān approached and responded to the Qur'ān.

Ibn Barraġān himself would have viewed the question of his inspiration from Neoplatonism and Ismā'īlism as a moot point. He clearly found merit in certain Neoplatonized categories, but he lived and breathed the Qur'ān and Prophetic behavioral model (*sunna*). He expressed himself and thought in relation to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. The pillars of his thought at every step are founded upon the grounds of scripture, which, to his mind, would confirm his readings of the Brethren, and other esoteric works.

HIS MAIN SOURCES

What *can* be said about Ibn Barraġān is that he drew upon four primary pools to enrich his worldview: (1) the Qur'ān; (2) Ḥadīth and Biblical materials; (3) The writings of the Brethren of Purity, and especially "The Comprehensive Treatise" (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*), and supplemented possibly by indirect Ismā'īlī influences; and (4) Ibn Masarra's mysticophilosophical writings centered on the pivotal notion of *i'tibār*.

- (1) Ibn Barraġān's soul and intellect were nourished and sustained by the message of the Qur'ān. His thought patterns and his memory were thoroughly Qur'ānicized. He found reference for his cosmological doctrines in literal, hyperliteral, and metaphorical readings of Qur'ānic verses. The Qur'ān consistently informs, sharpens, and buttresses his worldview and anchors his thoughts. As an exegete and a specialist in Qur'ānic readings (*qirā'āt*), Ibn Barraġān was intimately familiar with every consonant of the Qur'ān, and quotes Qur'ānic verses (and sometimes their variants) from memory at

almost every page of his tafsīrs. Moreover, his familiarity with the broader tafsīr works of the Sunnī tradition, such as Ṭabarī (d. 311/923) is evident in the *Tanbīh* and the *Īdāh*. Yet, Ibn Barrajan opposes mainstream exegetical interpretations of Qur'ānic verses so often that his tafsīrs can hardly be classified as mainstream Sunnī. He justified his reliance upon such sources by appealing to the “Principle of Qur'ānic Hegemony” (Chapter 6) which maintains the Qur'an as a self-contained, self-standing text that explains itself and every branch of knowledge. This expansive and integrative hermeneutical principle, to which he adheres throughout his works, allows him to absorb and Qur'ānicize a broad range of sciences. He asserts that the veracity of any scriptural or sapiential text is to be weighed in light of its accordance with the Qur'ān. Reports are to be accepted, irrespective of their weakness or soundness, so long as they demonstrably align to the teachings of the Qur'ān. His attitude was always inclusive, not exclusive.

- (2) The broader collections of Sunnī Ḥadīth and the Biblical books of Genesis and Matthew represent an important repository of wisdom and inspiration for Ibn Barrajan that supplies him with innumerable proof-texts for his cosmology and ontology. His meteorological doctrine of the “Two Breaths” (*al-fayhān*, Chapter 5), for instance, vividly illustrates his belief in the ontological continuity of the two worlds and is directly lifted from Ḥadīth literature. Ibn Barrajan's studies in Ḥadīth began at an early age, and he gained a foundation in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* at the feet of the prominent Ḥadīth expert Ibn Manzūr. Like so many mystics of Islam, he freely employed weak ḥadīth reports in his works, and added a considerable amount of Biblical material as proof-texts for his mystical teachings, all within his Qur'ānically defined epistemology. His interest in the Bible (Chapter 7) is exhibited already in his *Sharḥ*, and plays out in interesting ways throughout his tafsīrs. For instance, Ibn Barrajan's preoccupation with the metaphor of the mustard seed and the six days of creation supplement his understanding of Qur'ānic narratives and are inspired largely from Biblical materials.
- (3) The Neoplatonized treatises of the Brethren, and especially “The Comprehensive Treatise” (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*), left a profound impact on Ibn Barrajan's vision of the world. Two key notions in Ibn Barrajan's writings, namely the Real Upon Which Creation is Created (ḤIMBK) which is the intrinsic divine harmony that permeates the created world, as well as his understanding of the Universal Servant

(*al-'abd al-kullī*), or God's preexistential manifestation that bridges the divinity and creation, are appropriated directly from the Brethren (Chapter 5) and worked into his reading of scripture. The Shī'ī teachings of Ismā'īlī-Fāṭimī authors may also have impacted Ibn Barraḡān's teachings, although this influence seems to be through indirect exposure to ideas in circulation in al-Andalus at the time rather than a direct borrowing from Ismā'īlism. Ibn Barraḡān's concept of cyclical time, and the paramount significance of the number 6 in his writings (Chapter 8) bear witness to the presence of Ismā'īlī thought in his works.

- (4) Another important source for Ibn Barraḡān's writings was Ibn Masarra, whose concept of *i'tibār*, or non-discursive reflection on God's signs in the universe as a complement to revelation, set the tone for his entire intellectual project. Ibn Barraḡān was heir to a richly elaborate mystical discourse on *i'tibār* which was honed and elaborated on from the fourth/tenth century onward. He centered his career, teachings, and writings on the notion of *i'tibār* (Chapters 2, 8). This term continued to play a profound role in the school of Ibn 'Arabī. However, the latter preferred to self-identify as a "*Muḥaqqiq*" (Realizer) instead of a Mu'tabir.

Apart from these four principal sources, it is clear that Ibn Barraḡān drew upon many other sources in his writings. The most obvious of these are his frequent citations of poetry, his occasional digressions into flowery rhyming prose, his employment of technical terms of rhetoric, grammar, and lexicography in his Qur'ān commentaries as well as his philological interpretation of the divine names in the *Sharḥ* (Chapter 4). These digressions bespeak Ibn Barraḡān's solid Andalusī educational training.

Additionally, the works of classical Eastern Sufi authors are detectable in Ibn Barraḡān's writings. Ibn Barraḡān lifted passages on God's oneness and omnipotence directly from Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's (d. 386/996) *Qūt al-qulūb* in his *Sharḥ*, and possibly in his Qur'ān commentaries (Chapter 4). Moreover, works of figures such as Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Abū Sa'ī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253/867), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), and his important student Abū Sa'īd b. al-A'rābī (d. 341/952) were probably available to him.

However, the question of Tustarī's influence and identity in Andalusī mysticism as a whole has yet to be laid to rest, and this dilemma is confirmed by a reading of Ibn Barraḡān's writings. Although Tustarī

is mentioned by name several times in his works, this major Sufi exegete does not appear to have had a significant impact on his cosmology or Qur’ānic hermeneutics (Chapters 6, 8). This is evidenced, for instance, by the distinctiveness of Ibn Barraġān’s approach to the Qur’ān and the fact that he never ascribes any cosmological function to Muḥammad. The doctrine of the Muḥammadan Light (*al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*) is entirely absent from his works. In addition, the authenticity of Tustarī’s writings (specifically, his treatise on the letters) has been called into question in recent scholarship, and although Ibn Barraġān claims to cite Tustarī, he may in fact have been engaging with a parallel, “pseudo-Tustarian” body of writings in al-Andalus that served as a cover for authors inspired by various esoteric sources, including Shī’ī-Ismā’īlī and perhaps hermetic sources.

Ash’arī theology and Mālikī law, the two dominant schools in Andalusī religious discourse, left the least impact upon Ibn Barraġān’s writings. Although Ibn Barraġān takes an Ash’arī position on the classic questions such as the relationship between the divine Essence and attributes, or free will versus predeterminism, he does not elaborate on them. Only a thin layer of Ash’arī theology can be detected in his works, in particular his stray references to the doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*). Ibn Barraġān was openly critical of the doctrine of *bilā kayf* and Ash’arīs’ excessive stress on the ontological “otherness” of the realities of the hereafter. Furthermore, his commitment to the Mālikī legal tradition was highly ambivalent. He was certainly not fully committed to this school which he criticized through indirect references. Moreover, many of his legal opinions, such as the permissiveness of marriage for pleasure (*nikāḥ al-mut’a*), go flatly against all classical Sunnī juridical opinions.

Finally, Ibn Barraġān had knowledge of *falsafa*, which he vociferously condemned for taking recourse to reason (*‘aql*) over scriptural proof (*naṣṣ*). His knowledge of philosophy was probably derived from his readings of the Brethren, or indirectly from the study of theology, rather than direct and prolonged engagement with formal philosophical texts. While it is doubtful whether Aristotelian cosmology influenced Ibn Barraġān’s worldview, there is a heavy presence of Neoplatonism (perhaps via Brethren writings) in his concept of the Universal Servant as well as ḤMBK.

A FINAL THOUGHT ON THE “GHAZĀLĪ OF AL-ANDALUS”

Ibn Barraġān was known among his contemporaries as the “Ghazālī of al-Andalus.” When Andalusīs spoke of him as *their* Ghazālī, they had in

mind Ibn Barraġān's function of parallel importance, a similarity of stature, and an attachment to both Islamic orthodoxy and mysticism. For Ibn Barraġān too was the product of a great, parallel, and seminal mystical, theological, philosophical, and exegetical tradition and his impact was felt across the Islamic world through the writings of his successors. From a broad historical perspective, moreover, the epithet is perfectly fitting. For just as Ghazālī's writings traveled to the Islamic West where they were both contested and lauded, and where they had an invigorating impact on the religious discourse of al-Andalus, likewise Ibn Barraġān's writings traveled to the Islamic East both independently and through the writings of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, and they too were debated, acclaimed, and exerted a major invigorating impact upon the Islamic intellectual tradition. By the ninth/fifteenth century, Eastern scholars of mystical bent appreciated, extended, systematized, and consolidated this tradition and often recognized that many of the major exponents of Philosophical Sufism hailed originally from the Islamic West. The Mu'tabirūn tradition, which journeyed from the Muslim West to the Muslim East, helps explain why the Andalusī mystical tradition had such an extraordinary impact upon so many medieval Eastern authors. Viewed from this broader perspective, if Ibn Barraġān was hailed as the "Ghazālī of al-Andalus," then one can finally acknowledge Ghazālī as the "Ibn Barraġān of Khorasān."

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